

COUNTRY LIFE

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THE DUCHESS OF WESTMINSTER.

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THE Journal for all interested in

Country Life and Country Pursuits

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THE PAST YEAR.

ONCE more the time has come round for passing the compliments of the season, and, with the sincerity which we can extend even to impersonal friends, we wish our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Next week, at this time, we shall be looking forward to 1906, and wondering what it will bring; for the moment it is natural for the eye to take a retrospective glance, and it is inevitably a grave, and very often a sad, task. It brings before us memories of the private friends we have lost during the twelve months now wearing to a close, and of the public characters whose places shall know them no more. The obituary for 1906 is happily not a long one, as far as distinguished men are concerned. Scholarship is still mourning the loss of Sir Richard Jebb, and the echoes of the lamentation raised over the sudden death of Sir Henry Irving have not yet died away. But it has not been a year remarkable for its deaths; there has been no gap made in literature, politics, science, or art, that cannot be filled. Those eminent men who were with us at the beginning of the year are, for the most part, with us still; nor has the period been distinguished by any work of the highest import. There have been published many useful books of biography and history, and the year has brought forth several very interesting volumes of *belles lettres*, though no novel or poem stands out conspicuously above the rest. Science has gone on adding to our knowledge, but the year has not been marked by the discovery of anything analogous to the X rays or to wireless telegraphy. The art exhibitions of the year have been interesting and suggestive, yet we can call to mind no picture that will make the year memorable. Even in politics the year has been notable more for the preparation for a crisis than for the crisis itself. Since this time last year the political air has been thick with rumours of dissolution, but not until the winter days were nearing their

shortest did rumour become definite announcement. The controversy on the fiscal policy has been going on much as it has done for two or three years previously, but no new step of the first importance has been taken. Thus, as far as home affairs are concerned, the year has been marked by steady and wide progress, but by no sensational event.

If we turn to the subject which may be accounted of most interest to our readers—that of agriculture—we find that much the same kind of thing might be said. The year has been full of interest to the close student, but fruitful of no event likely to arrest the attention of the general observer. Its most significant feature might be written in one word of five letters—wheat. At the beginning of 1905, the price had risen to a point that could almost be called satisfactory, since on the greater portion of English land wheat can be raised profitably at a return of 30s. per quarter. It seems as though the instinct of our farmers had foreseen this rise, since the area devoted to this cereal was larger than it had been for several years, and this forecast appeared to be more accurate than forecasts usually are, until news came of the tremendous harvest reaped in Canada, which brought about a great drop in prices. Point by point, however, this was recovered, till the closing weeks of the twelve months see the price of wheat in 1905 within a limited number of pence of what it had been in 1904—a significant monition of the rise that may be expected in future years. Canada will not always have a bumper harvest, and the consumers are rapidly gaining ground on the producers in other parts of the world. On the whole, it has not been a bad year for farmers. Not only was the price of wheat more satisfactory than it had been for some time previously, but sheep proved, as they had often done before, to be the sheet anchor of the agriculturist; and other kinds of livestock and farm produce generally, if they did not sell well, at least sold much better than they had done for some years past.

It was not at home, but abroad, that the most interesting events of 1905 took place. When the year opened, the war between Russia and Japan was raging furiously still; but, thanks to the energetic and unconventional interference of President Roosevelt, it was, in the course of a few months, brought to a conclusion, and a new Anglo-Japanese alliance formed an interesting sequel to the ratification of peace, and seemed to point definitely to an entirely new state of affairs in the Far East. In this connection, great praise is due from all parts of the Empire to Mr. Balfour, who made this arrangement with Japan, improved our relations with France, and cultivated the friendliness of the United States. All these occurrences might have been expected to lay the foundation of a feeling of security and peace; but it would be a mistake to assume that this has been done. As the year closes there is a feeling in the air, which no one can exactly define and which cannot be explained away, that a great national crisis is coming on, and that probably before another twelve months have rolled past we shall have had experience of events which, for good or evil, will help to reshape and remodel the affairs of the British Empire. It is, however, very seldom that the expected happens, and the very consciousness of impending danger may perhaps lead to its being averted. Yuletide is not a time in which one likes to figure as a prophet of war and possibly of disaster, yet the very agreement that exists among English Ministers on all sides as to the steps to be taken in preparation for possible calamity points to danger of a serious kind, while the official utterances of German statesmen, both as they are spoken in the Reichstag and as they are set forth in official publications, point to the same apprehension. Nor can the usual means of allaying a quarrel be resorted to, because in this case it is well understood that the rivalry is no matter of sentiment, but a struggle for material interests. Yet the ultimate gain can scarcely, under any circumstances, compensate for the sacrifice that would be entailed, and it is to be hoped that the strenuous and earnest efforts made in Germany, as well as in Great Britain, will result in our not having recourse to the stern arbitrament of arms. Such hopes are natural to this season, and yet he would be no friend to his country who accentuated them too deeply. A nation, like an individual, has a certain self-respect to maintain, and the only known way of avoiding a quarrel is to stand in readiness to take it up if forced upon us. "Friendly, but firm," should be our motto, and, standing to it, we can safely wish a Merry Christmas, not only to those at home, but to our rivals on the Continent. If we are ready for war, it is only to defend our own, and through no wish to be aggressive towards them.

Our Portrait Illustration.

OUR frontispiece this week is a portrait of the Duchess of Westminster. The Duchess is descended from the second Earl De La Warr, and is a sister of Princess Henry of Pless.

COUNTRY



NOTES

CHRISTMAS-TIME this year promises to be one of the brightest we have experienced for a long time. There is no war going on to cloud the merriment of the time with its anxieties, and trade, which has been in a languishing condition for some time past, is now showing unmistakable evidence of revival; but abroad the outlook wears no such pleasant aspect. Seldom has a spectacle so utterly miserable been witnessed as that which is presented by Russia. This once great country is torn by insurrection and riot; and with all the turbulence is a growing dread of the awful spectre of famine which is even now hovering over the peasantry. From recent news we know that the cup of Russia's suffering is not yet full, and, whatever we may think of the political stakes at issue, it is impossible to help sympathising with the innumerable poor who, through no fault of their own, seem doomed to untold suffering. In the other parts of Europe the same trade revival which is being felt here is experienced, and although it is the time of wars and rumours of wars, the impulse of the moment is to look on affairs with a sanguine hope that a peaceful solution may be found of the difficulties. Such, at least, is what we like to think, at the season when the divine message of "On earth peace, goodwill toward men," comes ringing from church to church through every Christian land.

It generally happens that at a General Election a certain number of conspicuous characters disappear from public view, and it seems that after that which is impending Mr. Labouchere will no longer sit in the House of Commons. Concerning Mr. Labouchere's politics it would be out of place to say anything here, but for the extent of a generation he has been a "character" almost equally interesting to both sides of the House, one of the few men whose individuality stood out clear and strong to the public gaze. Possibly the young generation have forgotten the old stories that used to be current about the diplomatic days of "Labby," as he was familiarly called, and for a long time past he has not cut so prominent a figure in the House as he did while he was the colleague of the late Mr. Bradlaugh. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that his last conspicuous appearance was when he appeared before the South African Commission to face the late Mr. Cecil Rhodes. His paper, too, seems to have faded a little into the background. Yet the memory of Mr. Labouchere is one that is likely to long continue green in the House of which he has been so many years a member.

Our number had scarcely gone to press last week, when intelligence arrived of the death of one of our ablest contributors, who had been known to the world by the name of Miss Fiona Macleod. This, however, was only the *nom de plume* of that distinguished man of letters, Mr. William Sharp, who had won his spurs in the literary world of London by criticism of the highest kind, his book on the "Sonnet" being one of the most complete monographs of its kind extant. As is the way with many writers, Mr. Sharp had been driven along the line of least resistance in what we might call his highest everyday work, and he felt that it was stifling the highest vein of poetry he possessed. He was born in the Western Highlands of Scotland, and had, from infancy, imbibed a love of Nature and a taste for the wild Gaelic poetry of that region; but he could find no audience for it. The

London public, when it has heard one kind of thing from a man, is reluctant to believe that he is capable of doing anything else. Yet all that was best in William Sharp was overlooked as long as he wrote under his own name, but found meet expression when he discovered that he contained within himself the woman whom we knew as Fiona Macleod.

"FIONA MACLEOD."

Mystic, and dreamer of dreams, oh Thou of the beautiful vision,

Hushed is thy voice, and thy feet have gone out to the shadowy ways;

Whither—to twilights forlorn or to fortunate islands Elysian?—

Whither we know not but weep, thinking the desolate days:—

Days that shall find Thee no more in the high and the solitary places.

Never again shalt Thou come to the valleys, and forests, and streams;

One with the shadows art Thou, and a face of the fugitive faces,

Gone from the ways of the world, passed through the gateway of dreams.

Yet it may be when the wind is an infinite sigh in the grasses,

When the wave moans on the shore, and the twilight is ghostly and still,

Thine shall the step be that comes without sound, without echo that passes,

Thine the sweet silence that sleeps ever on moorland and hill.

And it may be, though thy form is a thing that is softer than shadow,

Thou shalt be heard in the song of the bees, and the birds, and the streams,

Breath of the wind in the trees, and a gleam of the light on the meadow,

One of the spirits that come back from the valley of dreams.

R. G. T. C.

Sir Frederick Pollock has written a letter to *The Times*, on the question of the copyright of letters written to dead people, that will be read with interest by those who followed the remarks made here upon the same subject last week. Sir Frederick Pollock appears to show that Mr. Justice Kekewich was right in regard to the Lamb letters, and that our lawyer was also right in what appeared at first sight to be a contrary opinion in the case of the Browning poem which we published. In that of *Macmillan v. Dent*, it is pointed out that those who objected to the publication were not the representatives of Charles Lamb, but those who had purchased their rights, whereas in our case we were dealing with the representatives of the poet. Sir Frederick Pollock is so good a lawyer that we must conclude him to be right, though his pronouncement is somewhat confusing. Supposing that the heir of a deceased man of letters were to sell his rights, it would appear from the argument now submitted that these rights would be restricted as soon as they passed to the recipient, a somewhat paradoxical state of things. At any rate, Sir Frederick Pollock only disposes of one objection. It remains that the sanctity of private letters cannot be maintained. Under the decision of Mr. Justice Kekewich this holds equally good, even if we accept the opinion of Sir Frederick Pollock.

An interesting and important document has just been added to the treasures of the British Museum. This is a copy of the original proclamation which was issued from Whitehall the very day before the Pretender landed. It offers £30,000 to "such person and persons who shall so seize and secure the said son of the said Pretender, so that he may be brought to justice." At the time, George II. was in Hanover, and the document is signed by the thirteen Lords Justices who administered the kingdom in his absence. The interest in the proclamation is to a large extent sentimental, because it is a fact that will ever redound to the honour of the Highlanders that, though for many months Prince Charles was known to be amongst the glens and caves, and his secret must have been known to thousands of poor people, it was well kept, and eventually he managed to escape. There are few examples in history of loyalty at once so general and so profound.

We have received a request to warn householders against treating postmen at Christmas-time. There is a great temptation to do this, especially in the country, where the officials of the Post Office have often to travel many weary miles before their heavy delivery is done, and it is only a natural and kindly feeling to offer them refreshment at this season. Still, we think they themselves would willingly admit that the kindness is somewhat mistaken. If every recipient of a letter or parcel at Christmas were to give the bearer of it alcoholic liquor, his state at the end of the journey might be more easily imagined than described. It is much better to put a check on one's hospitality at the time, and to take a later opportunity of showing gratitude to this humble and faithful servant of the public.

An excellent experiment is being tried in Cumberland, on the estate of the Earl of Lonsdale. This is the starting of a

co-operative kitchen for the purpose of supplying a group of miners' cottages at Kells, near Whitehaven. It has not been found possible to equip each cottage with the apparatus for a hot-water supply, and the idea is to distribute it to them from this kitchen for domestic and other purposes. It will be interesting to find how this works out in the matter of cost, as, of course, that is the pivot on which the experiment turns. We may take it that no country landlord can supply hot water to the cottagers at the existing low rentals, which, as a matter of fact, scarcely yield him any interest whatever on his capital. But if by means of one central kitchen hot water can be economically distributed to a group of houses at no immoderate outlay, the convenience to the cottagers will be very great indeed.

The lament of Professor Soddy is a singular one. The Professor has been making experiments with gold, in the belief that this metal, like radium, is capable of being disintegrated and of forming "offspring" elements. It is an interesting research, but he complains that he has to pursue it under strict limitations. For one thing, like the rest of us, he has only one lifetime at his disposal, and, alas! during this lifetime, only a limited supply of gold. In this particular also he resembles most of the rest of us. But he is aware that in the coffers of the Bank of England tons of this metal are lying practically useless, and the burden of his lament is that he cannot get at it for the purpose of carrying on his experiments. Perhaps, if the Governor of the Bank of England were to relent and give him the permission for which he craves, and he were successful in disintegrating the gold, he might find out a fact of which he appears at present to be ignorant—viz., that the gold reserve of the Bank of England is not quite so useless as it appears.

The more that turbine engines are tested in the trans-Atlantic steamers the more the merit of this mode of propulsion is manifest. For some months testimony has been accumulating of the superior speed of vessels thus fitted, and the last week or two has borne striking evidence to their good behaviour in rough weather. They have kept their scheduled time on the outward passage, which is the more trying, because it is in the face of the big seas, and the passengers have been very ready to praise the absence of vibration which has been so marked, as compared with vessels driven by ordinary engines, in smooth waters, but which some were afraid would not be maintained in seas big enough to throw the screws out of water when the stern of the ship was elevated. Further experience has shown that this was a groundless fear, and that the turbine engines are as satisfactory in heavy weather as in fair. It seems likely that in a short time passengers will be very reluctant to cross the ocean in any except turbine-fitted boats.

The project of forming a school of forestry for Wales has been taken up so earnestly and influentially that there seems every prospect that it will be realised. It was made the subject of a discussion mooted by Mr. Robinson of Boncath at the recent annual meeting of the Agricultural College of Aberystwith, who expressed the view that after the initial expenses, which could be met by some moderate grants on the part of those locally interested, and by a Government loan, the school could be made self-supporting at the end of eight years. He also expressed a hope that a tramp colony might be usefully employed in the work. Mr. Herbert Lewis, M.P., who was one of the speakers, drew attention to the good work done by the Liverpool Corporation in afforesting areas about Lake Vyrnwy. There are so many large tracts in Wales that are practically unproductive at present, that it seems as if the Principality was almost as specially adapted for forestry as those portions of the Black Country which are already in the initial stages of redemption from their useless unproductivity by the same beneficent means. Mr. Lewis aptly commented on the opportunity of Birmingham, now that it had followed the example of Liverpool in tapping Wales for its water supply, to imitate its example also in the afforestation of waste areas.

It is probable that most unprejudiced people who are interested in the very important question of our national sea fisheries will agree in the main with the answer given by Lord Linlithgow to the resolution passed at the conference convened by the National Sea Fisheries Protection Association. This resolution was virtually to condemn the action of the Scottish Fishery Board in closing the Moray Firth to British trawlers, and to ask that the prohibition might be rescinded. The injustice done by this prohibition is that, while forbidding British trawlers to work in the Firth, it naturally cannot extend that prohibition to foreign fisher boats. The strength of Lord Linlithgow's position in declining to interfere rests on the fact that an international enquiry into the conditions governing the supply of edible fishes in the North Sea has been in progress for some years, and that its report is due in July, 1907. It is evident that the findings of that enquiry may, and we think they will,

considerably modify the view that is taken at present of the effect of trawling in such waters as those of the Moray Firth; but, in the few months that will intervene, the hardship of the present prohibition had better be patiently borne than any further uninformed legislation attempted. Such, at least, appears to be the not unreasonable view of Lord Linlithgow, and, as a matter of fact, he pointed out that the real foreign trawlers had virtually ceased to fish the Firth, and that the thirty trawlers that did visit it were British owned, but flew the Norwegian flag to evade the prohibition.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

I passed the shippoon door, I felt a light snow fall;
The sheep were in the fold, the cattle in the stall;
I heard the cows low soft, and the straw shift on the floor,
I heard them sigh and stir as I lingered at the door.
I did not lift the latch, I did not ope the door,
I heard the clock strike twelve from the church upon the moor,—
The hour when cattle kneel, as they knelt when Christ was born,
In the dusky shippoon on the Christmas morn.

C. FOX SMITH.

Many people besides those who are of the small number of scientific meteorologists, will be pleased to hear that the Royal Meteorological Society has decided to set aside a portion of its Parliamentary grant for the purpose of investigating, by means of kites and otherwise, the conditions of the upper air. The investigation will be carried on in co-operation, and at times co-incidentally, with the similar investigations made on the Continent of Europe and from vessels at sea. Mr. W. H. Dines, F.R.S., will be the British director of the operations, having his own station for observation at Oxshott, and similar investigations will be undertaken by Colonel Capper at Aldershot, by Mr. C. G. Simpson on the hills of Derbyshire, by Mr. Cave at Ditcham Park, and by Mr. Salmon on the Brighton Downs. Professor Hergesell of Strasburg is the President of the International Commission for Scientific Aerostation. The skilled services of Captain A. Simpson of the steamship Moravian have also been enlisted. The extent, therefore, over which the investigations will be made affords every prospect that the data may be collated into a whole from which useful scientific generalisations may be drawn in regard to matters which it is a little curious that science has not similarly studied long ago.

As was anticipated, the New Zealanders have not been allowed to go through their tour with an unbroken record. The honour of lowering their colours fell to Wales, and the match, which took place at Cardiff, was very largely attended. Between 40,000 and 50,000 spectators are said to have been present, and although the match did not take place until half-past two in the afternoon, the visitors began to assemble at nine o'clock in the morning, forming in long queues as though they were waiting for a favourite piece at a theatre. The game proved to be worthy of the interest it had excited, turning out to be one of the sternest and hardest struggles ever witnessed on the football field. The Welsh players had taken a leaf out of the book of their opponents, and, abandoning their traditional game, played individually, and with so much dash and go that, although the contest was fairly equal, no expert who was present would dispute the fact that the better side won. Now that they have once suffered defeat, it is probable that the All Blacks will have some hard fighting to do, because the example set by Wales is bound to be followed by other teams. Besides, as was pointed out before, as the season goes on our men get hardened to their work. At the beginning they are fresh from desk and office, and quite unable to do their best. It is only after a long series of matches that they discover their utmost capabilities.

A few weeks ago we noticed that the local authorities in Spain were beginning to be alive to their possession of natural and architectural beauties that might be very attractive to the tourist if tolerable hotel accommodation and travelling conveniences could be found for him, and were making some effort to provide them, for the sake of the money that the tourist brings. Now comes a word of warning from the beautiful city of Seville, which has been much bepraised of late as a winter resort for those who are subject to rheumatism. Seville is one of the few Spanish cities which have a tolerable hotel. The warning comes from a resident English doctor, and is to the sense that they do not yet know, from experience of a sufficient number of cases, what the effect of the climate on rheumatic patients is really likely to be. He adds that a similar warning has been addressed to the German Press by a German doctor resident in Seville.

The roads of Sussex had at one time a notoriety for their evil conditions that was quite unrivalled. Within the last fifty years, however, they have been improved out of recognition; and now that requirements in the way of highroads are at so

much higher a standard than they were, the roads of Sussex have to yield the palm of villainy to those of the sister county of Kent. In that part of Kent which is known as the Weald they are, very generally speaking, nearly as bad as they can be. It has to be admitted that the authorities have exceptional difficulties to deal with. The original constructors of the roads, other than main roads (of which some are broad and well laid) made them very narrow, and they lie between the high hedges and "hop-loos," which are specially cultivated and constructed to give protection to the

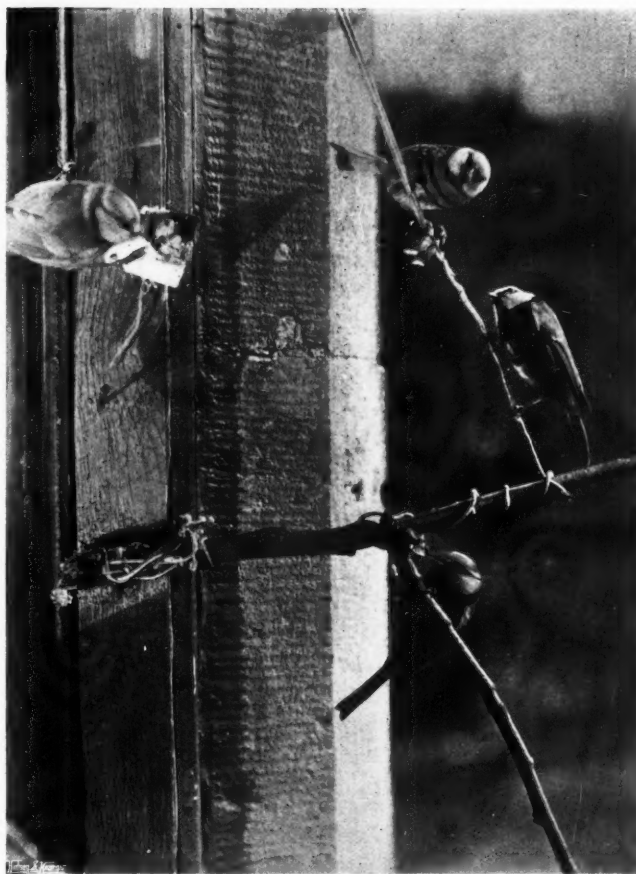
hops from the wind. While they act their part of wind-shields to the hops, they keep the wind no less from the roads, so that the mud and water lie in them unduly long. Doubtless, too, this is a condition which makes them very difficult to drain, and the fact is that their drainage is extremely defective, and that the arch of their crown is not always as defined as it might be, to give a chance for the water to run off to the sides. Narrow as they are, and high as are their hedges, we still think that a little care and attention might greatly improve them.

ROBINS AT THE WINDOW.

READERS of articles on "Tomtits and Chaffinches at the Window"—in these pages on March 12th and August 20th, 1904—have asked me several times: "But do not the robin redbreasts come to your window, too? Why do you not write about them and give us some pictures of them?" The following notes and the accompanying illustrations are my answer to these questions. I had been afraid that the subject was too obvious, and had been too often referred to, if not expressly written upon, by writers in prose and verse, for me to be able to add anything that was worth the writing. However, I cannot find that the subject has been illustrated by the aid of the faithful recording camera; so I venture to write with the photographs as my aegis.

It is November, and now the robins have quite settled their respective spheres of influence in the garden. There has been much quarrelling over the definite delimitation of boundaries, and frontier fights innumerable have been won and lost. A most coveted robin area for the winter months is close to the house on the south front, where there is a small formal garden with asphalt walk. This autumn it has been fiercely contested by Rags and Bobs, two lusty cock-robins, son and father. Rags, the son, is now eighteen months old, and his father, Bobs, is his senior by a year. The result of the fighting seems to be that the south front is divided almost equally by the birds, as well as the window larders, Bobs reigning supreme over one on the ground floor, whilst Rags, with his more youthful sprightliness, has to fly up to my third-storey window before he is quite at home.

See him on my window perch, the lively, pugnacious little fellow, while up and down most perkily goes his tail as he gets his balance. Then, after a preliminary chirp, he begins his



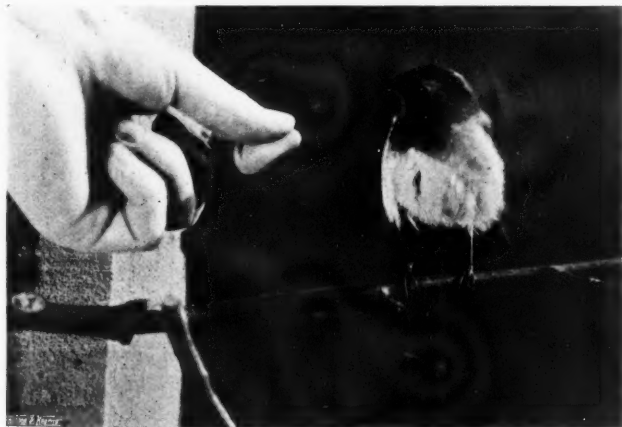
TOMTITS FEEDING AND FIGHTING.

pæan song, describing for me his hundredth undutiful victory over his father:

"I beat, beat, beat him,
Thoroughly, quite, quite thoroughly."

I get up from my writing-table, and go boldly across to the window, where my camera is ready fixed opposite the perch. Rags sees the broken walnut in my hand, and bobs up and down expectantly in a comical way he has learnt from his father Bobs—whence his name. My right hand takes hold of the shutter bulb, and I stretch out my left hand containing the nut to my cheerful little friend. Then, just as Rags has settled to begin on a particularly large morsel that looks as though it would choke him—as he always bolts his nut without chewing it—I close three fingers over the nut, and poke my nutless first finger and thumb within an inch of my ragged robin. His expression changes to surprised annoyance, and seems to say quite plainly: "Shame! really too bad; do play fair"; and whilst he is saying it, his watchful ears catch the click of the camera shutter, and with an expanding upward whisk of his wings and tail—also recorded by the camera—he has flown on to the top of the square-cut yew hedge below, from which he looks up at me reproachfully, uttering an angry "trit, trit."

The second illustration portrays the central incident of this scene. It is a true portrait, for the bird is ragged both in plumage and temper—both seem to be constantly ruffled. There is a dangerous glint in Rags' eye, which even the redoubtable



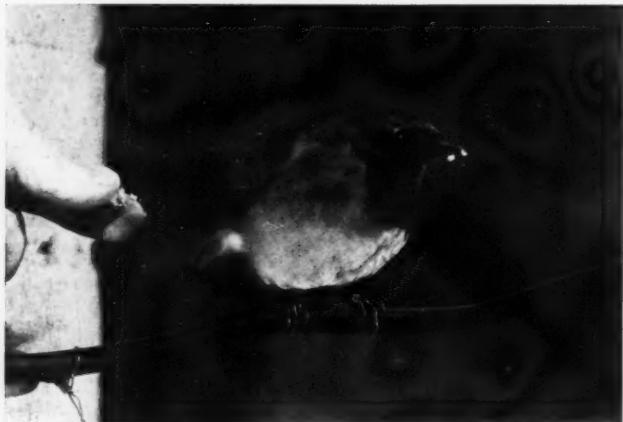
RAGS SURPRISED AND ANNOYED.



BOBS EXTRACTING A SWEET MORSEL

Bobs has learnt to fear, when he has come on a poaching foray up to my window; for old fat Bobs sometimes finds that his own larder has not been replenished with his favourite winter dish of crumbled walnut. Then, if I lean out of the window to call him, making a chirping noise by drawing in breath through upper front teeth pressed close against the inner side of the lower

lip, he will readily answer my invitation. It is not by notes from his beak that he answers—he is too cautious an old poacher for that; for he knows that Rags is only just round the corner telling a hen robin, Jinny, his spouse of the previous summer, what he will do to her if she comes down the terrace steps again on to his, Rags', own special garden walk. No, Bobs answers without a sound by flying up swiftly to the window perch, where he greedily



BOBS CAUGHT POACHING: DEFIANCE.

and hurriedly eats of the ample pinch of nut-crumb that I hold out for him. Sometimes, as in the fourth illustration, he is surprised by Rags when he is only halfway through his feed. He hears his son's angry war-cry as he alights on the furthest end of the perch—not included, alas! in the photograph. Then Bobs turns round to do battle with a beak that there is no time to clean of the tell-tale nut that sticks to it, a soft button at the end of his foil. He displays a bold and certainly expansive front to Rags, who is meditating parricide. The old bird turns his back to me, but he knows I will not betray him by pinching his tail, as it brushes the nut-crumb from my extended fingers, whilst with an effort he swings still further round to avoid the murderous flank attack that his son is on the point of delivering.

After driving his father away, Rags, with his waistcoat rougher than ever, comes hopping from the perch on to the inner ledge of the window; and then, as I walk back to my table, he follows me through the air, alighting on a gas-bracket just over the mantel-piece. I offer him no food, but sit down to watch him. He preens his feathers in a careless, hurried way, and scratches his breast-bone through the well-defined parting in his feathers. He then flies down on to the room floor; from there he hops on to the fender, and as there is no fire lit, he flutters on to the topmost smutty bar of the fire-grate, from which he peers venturesomely up the chimney, as though he would like to explore still further. What will he do next? Yes, it is just like him. He flies on to the bright, clean pages of a *COUNTRY LIFE*, leaving his sooty marks—the gaol-bird!—two confused broad arrows, athwart the full-page illustration of one of the country homes of England. With a 'shh and wave of the hand I frighten him off, but he only flies on to a bookshelf, for he is not easily alarmed. Rags thinks the room belongs to him as much as to me, and that no other bird certainly has any right to come even on to the window perch.

This *idée fixe* of his at times is rather troublesome, as he frightens away the other birds. I wanted one day to get a photograph of a number of tits as in the first illustration, but Rags scattered my hopes and the assembling birds time after time. I was so annoyed that at last I closed the window on him, and chased him round and round the room, intending to give him a lasting fright. For ten minutes I kept the window closed and Rags in durance. He was thoroughly frightened, uttering most plaintively a long-drawn tweet. The moment I opened the window again he whizzed through without alighting on the perch, and two or three minutes later I

saw him on the lawn beneath consoling himself with an early worm that had ventured out on an airing before sunset. It was quite three weeks before Rags forgot this act of treachery, as he considered it. He came into my room on the morrow of his imprisonment, but the moment I made a move towards the window he dashed out, and for many days he would not allow me even to stand between him and the open window.

It is easy to get a robin at my window not only to feed from the hand, but to make it at once both table and platform to stand on. Thus in the fifth illustration Jinny, a few months ago the well-beloved of Rags, is quite at home standing on my fingers. She is just beginning to make a peck at a tempting morsel of nut in the palm of my hand. Once before starting her meal she dropped from her beak a small stone into the palm of my hand. On another occasion, also, a robin presented me with a similar stone. Did the stones come from the birds' gizzards, or had they happened to have them in their throats, intending to swallow them? Who can say?

It is not easy to secure a good photograph of a robin, large



MRS. RAGS DINING ALONE.

size, quite close to the camera. The robins do not object to stand for their portrait if enticing food is provided, but to stand still, even for a sixtieth of a second, in a satisfactory pose within the narrow limits of good definition with an open lens, they will seldom vouchsafe to do. They suddenly give a bob or a twist of the head that spoils all, and they are very quick in noticing the click of the camera shutter. In the third illustration the robin has twisted his head to get a better grip of the piece of nut I am holding somewhat firmly between finger and thumb. This gave me the opportunity of securing a photograph of the bird quite still in a rather unusual attitude. Its wings are in the drooping position characteristic of robins, and the tail is somewhat slewed round on this side of the perch, balancing the head as the bird prepares for a tug of war.

In the first illustration there is something that at first sight is puzzling. The tom-tit eating almond on the string has a double bar of black across his yellow waistcoat. This is merely the shadow of the string projected by a mirror reflecting the sunshine from the interior of the window. The tit just below, climbing astutely up the string, left leg leading, is threatening an attack.

I have often wished to get a photograph of two or three robins together at the window, but this is not easy, owing to their quarrelsome disposition. Early on a frosty morning, by removing food from other bird ladders, I have had

three robins together fighting at my window, but at such times there is no sunlight to make a snap-shot feasible. When spring comes round the robins are seen less often at the window, as they prefer dainty caterpillars and grubs to cheese and nuts. Rags, however, has been faithful to my window all through the spring and summer. He sometimes has puzzled me by his appearance. For instance, on May 7th there had been cold rain and sleet in



RAGS AND HIS FAMILY: HUNGER AND SATIETY.

the afternoon, yet at six o'clock in the evening Rags turned up at my window, having evidently just taken a bath, shivering with all his feathers soaking wet, looking more ragged than ever. Why did he choose such a day and such an hour for his ablutions? And what a constitution he must have! He had at the time young ones in the nest. And in spite of his friendliness he resented my leaning out of the window to see whereabouts he took the food back to from my larder. Still more did he resent my coming to admire his nursery with the intention of taking a family group, as in the last illustration. Rags is showing his feelings by looking daggers at me, as though he would like to stab me, too, with that sharp-pointed beak of his. He had four youngsters in the nest. The one in front that has just been fed on a mixture of caterpillars and nut looks the picture of content. Two are asleep at the back of the nest, and the last, whose turn it is next to be fed, is hungrily yearning for food with wide-open beak, although it is not ten minutes ago since its throat was filled to its fullest capacity.

The young robins after they have left the nest do not follow their parents to the window larder as the young chaffinches do. But by September they have learnt for themselves as much as the old birds could have taught them, and, proud of their first red waistcoats, they often make a foray on the windows from their humbler territories further away from the house. But woebetide them if father or mother catches them poaching!

BERNARD BUTLER.

AYLSHAM FONT.

TAKEN as a whole, Norfolk churches may be said to contain more specimens of late Decorated fonts than any other style, although there are not lacking other examples representing periods from Early Norman to the present time in all the gradations of architectural treatment. Aylsham font belongs to the fourteenth century, and has the octagonal bowl characteristic of the period; but in some respects the design is out of the common, and somewhat original in character. Four of the panels of the bowl are occupied by the emblems of the Passion, the pillar, the spear and reed in saltire, and the scourges. Facing its eastern side is the Crucifixion, while the remaining four panels, which are alternate with those described above, bear the emblems of the four Evangelists. Being boldly and deeply cut, the general design tells out with marked effect in its high relief and dark shadow, leaving withal no doubt that the mason who fashioned this bowl and stem of the fourteenth century must have been of other stuff to the craftsman of nowadays, whose timid chisel has little liking for strong shadow or strenuous play of wrist, for this is an age when such waste of stone, not to speak of time, would sorely perturb a master mason. With due allowance for the quaintness of treatment of the design of the

symbols of the Evangelists on the Aylsham font, there remains, with all the character of its period, much that is of excellent and refined handling, with a charm all its own. Each panel that contains a shield bearing an emblem of the Passion is embowered in oak leaf and acorn, and on the rim of the deeply-set frame the petals of the quatre-foil are softly laid at intervals, to give the otherwise plain surface light and play of shadow, as if the mason were mindful of the effect of the flowers



F. H. Evans.

AYLSHAM CHURCH FONT.

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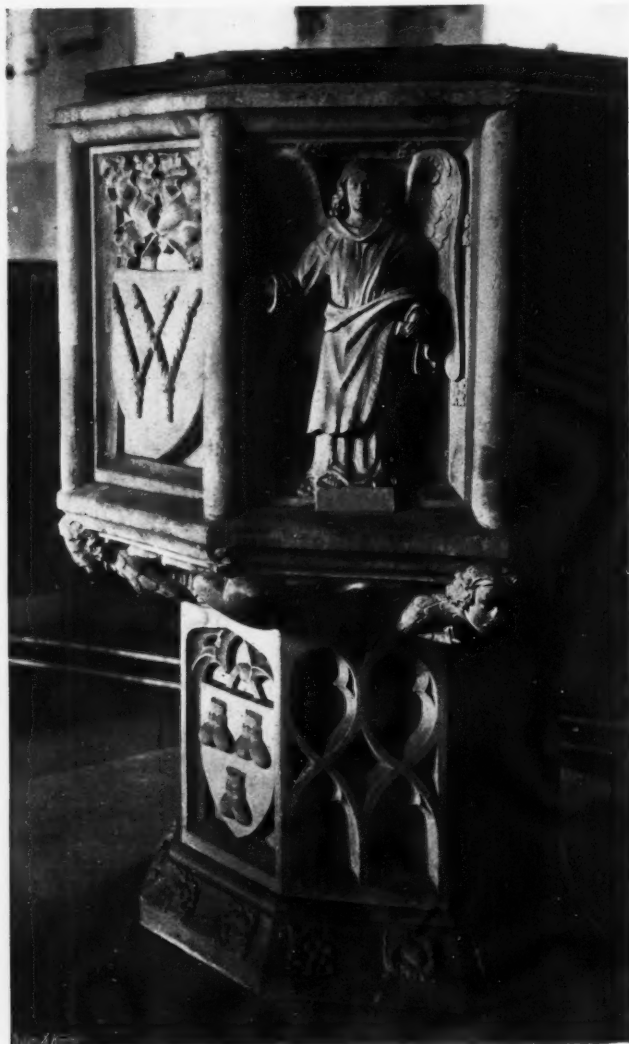
of the field in his design. The eagle and the winged lion stand strong and square within their stone framework, and, as the representation of symbolic figures, they are befitting and effective. How the panel containing the Crucifixion escaped the hands of the men who broke down all the carved images with axes and hammers is not known to history; but it has somehow been miraculously preserved through these long centuries and changing

times, when much else far less offensive to the susceptibilities of the iconoclast has been battered to pieces.

The base of the bowl of the font is carved alternately with angels with outspread wings and a winged human heart, out of which issues a little stem bearing a quatre-foil, which nestles with happy effect in the concavity of a deep moulding. On one side of the shaft of the font are carved the arms of France and England quarterly, with a label of three, which popular tradition assigns to John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III., who chiefly built the church of Aylsham about the year 1380. It is much more probable, however, they appertain to Henry Plantagenet, son of John of Gaunt, and afterwards Henry IV. of England.

The town of Aylsham was Crown property from a very early period, and in 1371 it became a "parcel" of the Duchy of Lancaster by the gift of Edward III. to John of Gaunt, from which time it was the principal town of the Duchy as far as Norfolk was concerned; but it has never fulfilled the old adage made on its Royal master, "As great as John of Gaunt."

There are three other coats of arms on the alternate faces of the stem of the font, amongst which is the well-known coat of



F. H. Evans.

THE ANGEL.

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Morley, with its rampant and crowned lion, which is to be met with on many churches in Norfolk; another of the ancient but less important family of Ross, which bear gules three water-bougets argent; also the ancient coat of the well-known soldier family of Erpingham, an inescutcheon within an orle of martlets, this race of veteran warriors being raised and having taken their name from the adjoining village to Aylsham, distant three and a-half miles. This coat of arms represents that of Sir Thomas Erpingham, who, among his many military achievements, accompanied John of Gaunt into Spain, fought in many of the wars of Henry IV., and took part in the great day of Agincourt. The Manor of Aylsham was granted to him for life by Henry IV., which increases the interest of his armorial bearings appearing on the font amongst those of his comrades in arms.

In the seventeenth century the font of Aylsham had a canopy, but this has shared the fate of many more in the county, which, however, has some left of considerable interest, and a few almost intact. Some of these, like that of the neighbouring church of Salle, are of great height and spiral form, having to be raised by a windlass from the ringing-loft or western gallery of the



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THE OX.

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WINGED LION.

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church. They have, generally, considerable amount of colour remaining upon them, and were very ornate and elaborate in their prime.

It is by no means a common occurrence to find a font like that of Aylsham in such good preservation; many in Norfolk, once beautiful and carved with loving care, have been terribly wrecked. Some of the churchwardens' books in the same county bear evidence to a handsome fee being paid to some choice specimen of humanity, who cheerfully bargained to go round and deface, hack, batter, and destroy everything he considered in bad taste. It was, on the whole, an easy day's work well paid for, and gratifying to the feelings of the wretch who did it. The church of Aylsham is itself a handsome structure, with much interest attached thereto; having royal benefactors and wealthy patrons, it speedily became a spacious building, with aisles, chapels, and rich ornamentation, some of which has survived to this day. The town was, furthermore, in the time of Edward II. and Edward III., above all others in the county celebrated for its linen, which, however, was superseded by that of the woollen trade in the days of Henry VIII.

"THE SWEET SHADY SIDE OF PALL MALL."

IN our Christmas Number some account was given of the new edition of "The Open Road," and to-day we hope to consider the companion volume to it, "The Friendly Town" (Methuen), which Mr. Lucas, the editor, tells us is meant "for the urbane." What we may reasonably look for in it, therefore, is literature more polished and courtly than is needed for the plain countryman. It should also be smiling and tactful and pleasing. The too dead-in-earnest, the highly moral, the very instructive will be out of place. We are glad to admit that he has not failed in his delicate enterprise, but has given us a charming book, the parts of which fuse themselves into a harmonious whole. Yet there are spots in the sun, and it may be worth while to glance at a few sins of omission and commission for which Mr. Lucas is responsible. It may perhaps be objected that Mr. Lucas is right to follow his individual bent, since it is a stereotyped though slovenly answer to criticism that "tastes differ." We are far from quarrelling with an idiosyncrasy; but, on the other hand, let the character of a piece be what it may, the standard ought not to be lowered. And in questioning the place of some of the poems, we are not really finding serious fault with Mr. Lucas. He is often in the position of one who buys pictures from the walls of the Royal Academy and does not truly know their worth to him till they have been hung for a time in his dining-room. One knows, too, what it is to have an artist friend and watch a picture develop under his hand. How difficult is it under such circumstances to determine its value. But hang it in your picture gallery beside a masterpiece of the same kind, and how soon does it fall into its right place. It is the same with poetry. Take as an example Mr. W. E. Henley's drinking song addressed to "Bob" Stevenson:

—"I am health, I am heart, I am life!
For I give for the asking
The fire of my father the sun,
And the strength of my mother the earth,
Inspiration in essence,
I am wisdom and wit to the wise,
His visible muse to the poet,
The soul of desire to the lover,
The genius of laughter to all.

Come, lean on me, ye that are weary,
Rise, ye faint-hearted and doubting,
Haste, ye that lag by the way!
I am pride, the consoler;
Valour and hope are my henchmen;
I am the angel of rest."

This is very fine verse, or appears to be so when looked at in a gallery of contemporaries; but place it among masterpieces, and at once we know it is too sonorous, and yet lacking in spirit and originality. Read this of Burns,



F. H. Evans.

THE "EAGLE" PANEL.

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which Mr. Lucas does not include, and it sinks into its place at once:

"O, Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan cam to see;
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,
Ye wad na find in Christendie.

Chorus.

We are na fou, we're no that fou,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may crawl, the day may daw,
And ay we'll taste the barley bree.

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And monie a night we've merry been,
And monie mae we hope to be!
We are na fou, etc.

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But by my sooth she'll wait a wee!
We are na fou, etc.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loun is he!
Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the King among us three!
We are na fou, etc."

But to take Mr. Lucas in a more orderly manner. His first section is "Winter and Christmas," and as we read again the fine pieces he has, as a rule, chosen, it goes against the grain to say "Out!" to any of them. But Mr. Francis Thompson, though at his best fit for the highest company, is not so in "To a Snow-flake." How laborious is this account of the making of a frost petal born in the breath of the wind:

"God was my shaper.
Passing surmisal,
He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapour,
To lust of His mind:—
Thou couldst not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinely, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed
With His hammer of wind
And His graver of frost."

It reads like the tale of a blacksmith's shop, and argues a sad lack of humour. Herrick and Wither and Thackeray are splendid, but Thomas Love Peacock is here a little large and condescending. The section called "Friends and the Fire" is, sooth to say, a little dull. In it is too much of such uninspiring bards as Cowper and Longfellow. It is continued by "More Friends," which seems to be a new way of writing cats and dogs. Some very inferior stuff is printed, while Gray's lines on his Selima are left out. Yet how much lighter, finer, more elegant than the pieces included:

"The hapless nymph with wonder saw:
A whisker first, and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretch'd, in vain, to reach the prize,
What female heart can gold despise?
What Cat's averse to fish?

Eight times emerging from the flood—
She mew'd to every watery God,
Some speedy aid to send.
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stir'd:
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan heard—
A favourite has no friend!"

Very little fault is to be found with "The Table and the Binn," though it was unkind to print the doggerel of Samuel Lover:

"So then I'll hold my lowly stand,
And live in German Vaterland;
I'll kiss my maiden fair and fine,
And drink the best of Rhenish wine.

Whene'er my maiden kisses me,
I'll think that I the Sultan be;
And when my cheery glass I tope,
I'll fancy that I am the Pope."

This rubbish follows Peacock's "Sir Peter," a piece that it is always a pleasure to quote:

"In his last binn Sir Peter lies,
Who knew not what it was to frown:
Death took him mellow, by surprise,
And in his collar stopp'd him down.
Through all our land we could not boast
A knight more gay, more prompt than he,
To rise and fill a bumper toast,
And pass it round with THREE TIMES THREE.

None better knew the feast to sway,
Or keep Mirth's boat in better trim;
For Nature had but little clay
Like that of which she moulded him.
The meanest guest that grac'd his board
Was there the freest of the free,
His bumper toast when Peter pour'd,
And pass'd it round with THREE TIMES THREE.

He kept at true good humour's mark
The social flow of pleasure's tide:
He never made a brow look dark,
Nor caused a tear, but when he died.
No sorrow round his tomb should dwell:
More pleas'd his gay old ghost would be,
For funeral song, and passing bell,
To hear no sound but THREE TIMES THREE."

In "Midnight Darlings" the only fault is that Herrick stands so vastly above those printed with him; one of these, at least, belongs to that order of which a famous man of letters used to say he could make a dozen between Shepherd's Bush and Charing Cross. The pieces on Music and Painting are too serious and sentimental; they make us wonder why Mr. Lucas has omitted Canning, for here you shall find neither the Needy Knife Grinder, nor the more appropriate Rogero:

"Whene'er with haggard eyes I view
This dungeon, that I'm rotting in,
I think of those companions true
Who studied with me in the U-
-niversity of Gottingen—
-niversity of Gottingen."

The general defects in this anthology of Mr. Lucas's are that, so far as contemporaries are concerned, he is somewhat too much under what we may call the tea-party influence, and has inserted a number of pieces that would scarcely have gained a place on their own merits. The authors possess a more or less illusory reputation, and in his selection from the writers of the past his mind seems to have run in grooves, with, perhaps, not sufficient sympathy with what is bold, original, clever, and humorous. At any rate, we cannot get rid of a certain feeling of dulness in the later sections of the book, though many of the pieces are such as are common to every anthology of the same nature. Since so many of these are inserted, we rather wonder that Mr. Lucas omitted that delightful poem in the most towny of Thackeray's novels:

"Although I enter not,
Yet round about the spot
Oft-times I hover:
And near the sacred gate,
With longing eyes I wait,
Expectant of her.

The Minster bell tolls out
Above the city's rout,
And noise and humming:
They've hush'd the Minster bell:
The organ 'gins to swell,
She's coming, she's coming.

My lady comes at last,
Timid, and stepping fast,
And hastening hither,
With modest eyes downcast;
She comes—she's here—she's past—
May heaven go with her!

Kneel, undisturb'd fair Saint!
Pour out your praise or plaint
Meekly and duly;
I will not enter there,
To sully your pure prayer
With thoughts unruly.

But suffer me to pace
Round the forbidden place,
Lingering a minute
Like outcast spirits who wait
And see through heaven's gate
Angels within it."

We could also wish, though not belonging to a very high class of poetry, that the verses of Captain Charles Morris had been published, as they at least sing the praises of London in sincerity—witness the last five verses:

"I have heard tho', that love in a cottage is sweet,
When two hearts in one link of soft sympathy meet:
That's to come—for as yet I, alas! am a swain
Who require, I own it, more links to my chain.

Your magpies and stock-doves may flirt among trees,
And chatter their transports in groves, if they please:
But a house is much more to my taste than a tree,
And for groves, O! a good grove of chimneys for me.

In the country, if Cupid should find a man out,
The poor tortured victim mopes hopeless about;
But in London, thank Heaven! our peace is secure,
Where for one eye to kill, there's a thousand to cure.

I know love's a devil, too subtle to spy,
That shoots through the soul, from the beam of an eye;
But in London these devils so quick fly about,
That a new devil still drives an old devil about.

In town let me live then, in town let me die,
For in truth I can't relish the country, not I.
If one must have a villa in summer to dwell,
O, give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall!"

If Mr. Lucas will use his blue pencil pretty freely in a new edition, and add to the many excellent pieces he has got together a few of the lively and agreeable verses that have been omitted, his book will be still more appropriately designated "for the urbane."

THE LESSONS OF THE RIVER.

WHEN we were boys I think the happiest of all our happy hunting-grounds was the stream or river that flowed down the course of the valley about a mile and a-half from our home. At what were, to us, its practical beginnings it came rushing out under a narrow archway, after doing service in turning the big wheel of the mill where corn and things were ground. The mill premises themselves were fine hunting-grounds, too, for they abounded with rats and mice, and the swallows and swifts had nests, in the spring, up in the high roof of the big loft, and did not seem to be troubled in the least by the thundering grinding of the great mill stones. There were big yellow underwings and other precious moths among the bags of corn and straw waiting to be ground to flour or cut to chaff, and the miller himself was a kindly soul, and generally gave us a welcome, though we must have been a sore vexation and hindrance to him at times, and his wife, if he made a good report of us, was always ready to give us a drink of milk. After the stream had come rushing from under the arch by the mill it passed down through the fold of the valley, fringed with willows, alders, birches, and all kinds of high and low floral growth, and so on down to a level water-meadow country where it pursued less hurried and vehement courses, and went between dull, muddy banks which it often overflowed in floodtime, making all the meadows like a lagoon. Just where it ceased from its most energetic vehemence, after passing the archway, it formed, round a little bend of the bank, a still pool, which was the home invariably, as it seemed, of the biggest trout in the river, or, at least, in that part of it; and in that pool we learned our earliest lessons in the natural history of fishes. I fear the greater number of the trout that we caught were taken with a lure less subtle and scientific than the fly. The worm was more deadly in our hands. But the chapter of natural history of which this wonderful pool was our schoolroom, was this. So soon as we caught, at the beginning of the season—that is to say, as early as April or even the latter end of March in that country—the monster (sometimes running to the prodigious weight of half a pound or so) of the pool, his place on the very day following would be inevitably taken by another, only one degree less monstrous. Then, when we had captured monster number two, a monster of the third degree, just one ounce, or even half an ounce only, it may be, less in weight, came

into occupancy of the pool; and so on all through the season—so fast as we caught one good fish in that pool another would come up to take its place, always a rather smaller fellow than his predecessor; but by so little smaller that the difference was only just perceptible. The lesson which this seemed to teach was that this pool was the favourite lodging for a trout in all the river, or, at least, in all that part of it—also that it was very much more properly to be called a lodging than a hotel. It was a lodging for a single gentleman or perhaps lady, and an unsociable one at that, for no companions were admitted to share it, and it was always occupied by the strongest and biggest fish in the neighbourhood. Another lesson was that this lodging must always have a number of would-be tenants waiting, in a kind of queue, to inhabit it, if they got the chance; and also that they must have been constantly on the look-out, must have looked in at the door every other day or so, to enquire after the health of the tenant for the time being; for after he had been removed by the agency of our hook and worm, the lodging did not remain any length of time vacant. Since those days we have had plenty of opportunity of confirming the teachings of this pool by what we have seen on other rivers, so that our river was not peculiar in it, though we should like to have thought so, and did think so at the time. As to the reason that the lodging was so favoured, it was fairly obvious. It was pleasant both as

lodging and as supplied with good board. All the re-use of the mill would come down there, gently circling into the pool after a vehement tossing as it went through the arch, and a fish could rest there out of the current at his ease.

Lower down, where the bed became more muddy and the flow of the stream less eager, the water was less suited to be the home of so noble a fish as the trout; and yet down there the fish were bigger, for they were pike, by no means the giants that you read about, but still big enough and greedy enough to tackle and swallow the biggest of the trout that we ever took from that favourite haunt below the mill. The pike began to interest us at a different time of year from the trout, when the banks of the river were all hard and frost-bound, and there was often an edging of ice stretching out over the placid flow of the water. And here, too, we found a lesson. It hardly mattered how gently we crept up on tip-toe to the water's edge; when the fringes were coated thus with a thin ice-layer it was almost impossible to approach so quietly as not to



C. E. Wanless.

THE HEAD OF THE MILL POOL.

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communicate a trembling of the earth under our foot-steps (though we were no Daniel Lamberts in those days!) to the ice, and from the ice to the silent water, which acknowledged the motion by wrinkling into little ripples. These ripples, of course, were the first sign visible to us of the tremor that our foot-steps carried to the water. We had been taught many things by our fathers about the necessity of going quietly up to the water's edge, of walking well inland, away

from the bank, as we went from one part to another of the river, and only coming to the stream again just at the point where we wished to begin to angle. We were told that if we did not observe all these precautions the fish would inevitably perceive us—hear us, or be conscious of us by some means or other; but it is not always characteristic of youth to receive with the attention and reverence that it should the admonitions of age, so we gave these counsels only a rather careless notice, for the most part being inclined to think, ostrich-like, that since we could not see or hear the fish, it was not very likely that they would be



D. Murray.

THROUGH THE WOOD.

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able to see or hear us. We did not put it to ourselves as clearly as that, but that is just about what it all came to. However, when we saw for ourselves the truth of this warning, thus strikingly shown by the wrinkling of the water at the edges of the ice as we came, ever so gingerly, to the bank, then we were indeed stricken with reverence for the wisdom of age, which knew so much, and we were satisfied that if the water were disturbed thus in a manner so plainly visible to our eyes as

we stood on the bank, it was likely to carry very distinct notice of our coming to the things that actually lived in the very water itself. There was no difficulty in realising it with this evidence before our vision, and this was a lesson that has probably cost many a fish his life at our hands in the many days since we learned it. We were not very elaborate in our methods of angling for the pike, but a good blob of worms will do much with jack of 3lb. or 4lb., and the latter was the biggest weight that we ever took from our river. A moorhen—a bird destitute of the practical



W. A. J. Hensler.

PLACIDLY THREADING THE MEADOWS.

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M. C. Cottam.

A HAUNT OF PIKE.

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faculty, which was ours in some measure, even as boys, of learning from experience—had her nest each year in the lower branches of an alder leaning out over the river. If we found her eggs in time, while they were newly laid, we took them, for they were excellent eating for schoolroom tea; but if not, the moorhen mother was allowed, so far as our interference went, to sit upon and hatch them. And then, so soon as the little balls of dark fluff that were the baby moorhens had come out of the shell, the mother used to lead them out, like a little flotilla, over the water. But only a percentage of them ever came to land again, for year after year she chose to build over the weedy haunts most frequented by the pike, and as they saw the little balls of fluff sailing over the stream, they went for the balls with a great rush, there was a snap of jaws, and all that was left of the fluffy ball had gone to its last rest, so soon after its first birth, in the unattractive grave of a pike's interior. Such are the tragedies of Nature! But by the time a moorhen has been many times a mother, as this must have been, she ought to be old enough to know better than choose such insanitary sites for her nursery.

IN THE GARDEN.

ROSES IN LATE AUTUMN.

NOT having visited the garden for some time, we were prepared, on a recent autumn day, to find a few leaves hanging on the bushes and decay everywhere, without a flower to relieve the desolation after frost. The Rose-beds were, however, still bright with bloom. The Hybrid

"Love in a Mist" we know so well, but without any sacrifice of beauty of form. We shall sow more of it next year.

The Pansies.—The tufted varieties have been referred to on more than one occasion, but they were the feature of the garden this year. Even now the pretty little "Queen of the Year" is flowering on a rather cold border, and a little gem the writer received from Nice is never without its blue bloom. Enthusiasts such as Mr. D. B. Crane of Highgate have done much to popularise these useful garden plants, and they deserve the thanks of garden-lovers. Tufted Pansies are certain to give good results, and they are therefore plants particularly for the beginner and those with small gardens, where they will flower almost throughout the year with a little care. Another way is to use them with Roses as a carpet to the soil, only too thick planting is a source of much harm to the former. When they are kept within reasonable bounds, and not allowed to encroach on the Roses, the two make a happy association if the colours of the two flowers are not allowed to clash.

THE COSMOS.

Mr. C. W. Hoitt, Nashua, N.H., U.S.A., writes: "In your issue of October 28th I note, 'In the Garden,' your article on 'The Cosmos.' I have grown them here in New Hampshire for several years with the most satisfactory success. Procuring the seed of the early-flowering variety, I sow it in a cold frame—no heat—transplanting to the border the first part of June, when all dangers of frost are past. They begin to show flower in late July, and continue until cut down by the early frosts in September. I note three colours—white, pink, and crimson. Large sprays of them cut while in bud will open out, and I have known, in late fall, after all were killed about here, the florists and growers about Philadelphia to cut them in the bud state and ship to Boston, some 300 miles distant, there to be bloomed and sold as cut flowers. No cut flower stands better; none more delicate or dainty. Furnished with stiff stems, they 'make up' well into hand, vase, or table



SWOLLEN WATERS.

Tea Sulphurea had flowers which for shape, exquisite colouring, and sweet scent were more perfect than those of summer, and the reason is not far to seek. This is one of the purely garden Roses, expanding too quickly in a hot sun, without that waxiness which the cooler atmosphere of autumn brings forth. Corallina was in full bloom, and the deep crimson buds are welcome in the cool light of autumn, and the too-little-known Rose Camoens formed, as it has done through the summer, the brightest Rose-bed in the garden. There is not a freer or more satisfactory hybrid in the Rose world, and this after having been introduced for nearly a quarter of a century. This trio of Roses were in this condition after two nights of severe frost, and we mention this so that the intending planter of Roses during the next few weeks may include them in his selection.

TWO HOMELY FLOWERS.

Nigella Miss Jekyll has been under trial in the writer's garden, and was very fine; but in some gardens, owing to the influence of the trying weather in the spring, it was somewhat disappointing. It was raised by Miss Jekyll in her beautiful Munstead garden, and on a cool soil, and when properly thinned out, no annual has a greater charm of growth and colour. The flowers are as blue as a *Nemophila*, and much larger than those of the

bouquets, alone, or in combination with other flowers; for an easily-grown flower, none is more serviceable or enjoyable."

RANDOM NOTES.

China Roses and White Lilies.—It is more important at the time of planting to know of beautiful associations of flowers than when they are actually in bloom. We can prepare the picture now, and a picture which gave more delight to the writer than any other last summer was a grouping of China Rose and white Lily. A pergola had been made the year before, and in the space between each two stems was a bordering of these two beautiful flowers. Only the common China Rose was used, and the effect was surprising. Happily, the Lilies succeeded well, and there was no sign of disease.

The Beautiful Blue Convolvulus.—The name of this is *Ipomæa rubro-cærulea*, and a plant we referred to recently. A note from a very practical flower gardener regarding it contains much useful advice. "R." says: "It would seem that a much-increased interest is now being taken in this lovely climber, and its near relative *Mina lobata*, out of doors in the summer months, and both are, indeed, well worth the small amount of exposure and trouble necessary. I have hitherto failed utterly with the *Ipomæa*, owing to

having planted it out too early; but this year I kept my plants in the greenhouse till the end of June, by which time they were from 2ft. to 3ft. high and showing flower-buds, before putting them out in their places. I did the same with *Mina lobata*, which I had not previously tried, and the result in both cases was highly satisfactory. My own plants did well, and flowered splendidly, but they were simply miserable failures in comparison with some I gave to a gardening friend in the neighbourhood. On the south wall of his house he grew a single plant of each kind. The *Mina* was late in flowering, but came with a floriferous rush at the end, and was very handsome; rubro-cerulea was glorious for months, and on October 2nd there were no less than sixty-six expanded blooms on it. My friend took the keenest interest in his plant, watering it most carefully, and regularly snipping off the old flowers every evening. I did not take this precaution with mine, and I never had anything like the marvellous display that he had. Here, I think,

is a decided 'tip' for all growers in future: cut off the dead blooms every night, and let the new buds have every chance.

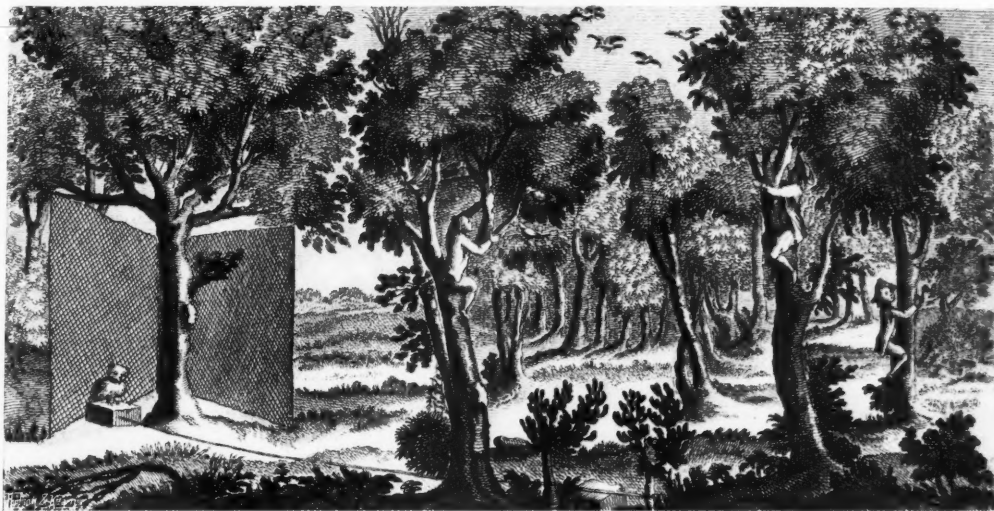
"*Mina lobata* lasts a prodigious time in water indoors; it is a quaint and pretty thing, and 'arranges' well with other flowers and greenery. For this reason alone it is worth growing, apart from its lovely foliage and effective appearance when rambling over a warm wall, a sheltered trellis, or the sunny corner of a rockery."

Coreopsis verticillata.—The writer has several plants of this *Coreopsis* in bloom, and they have been so for some weeks. It is not a rare kind, but it has exceptional merit, as the growth is strong without coarseness, and the pretty yellow flowers appear abundantly above the almost feathery segments. It is useful for cutting for the house, and as it is a perennial, requiring very modest conditions, it should be more grown in small gardens. A light soil and a moderate amount of sun suit it admirably.

OLD-TIME TRAPS AND SNARES.

I must be admitted that, while we have improved upon our ancestors' methods in the matter of hunting and shooting, we have fallen a long way behind them in the humbler craft of entrapping and ensnaring beasts and birds. It is true that considerable discredit has been brought upon this latter art

by the prevalence of the modern idea that they are fit only to be employed by poachers. We should now regard as a most unsportsmanlike performance the capture of game by devices which were formerly considered quite legitimate. And as for other wild creatures, instead of trying to ensnare them by cunning artifices, we prefer (most of us, but not all) to do them to death by the aid of "vile saltpetre," or else by the brutal and cruel pole-trap or gin. It is, therefore, as a matter of curiosity rather than that of practical interest that one looks at the representations which can still be found occasionally of elaborate traps and other skilfully-devised machines by which men have succeeded in triumphing over the instinctive caution and wariness of the brute creation. The date of the invention of these devices is, of course, veiled in complete mystery. Probably many of them were in use as

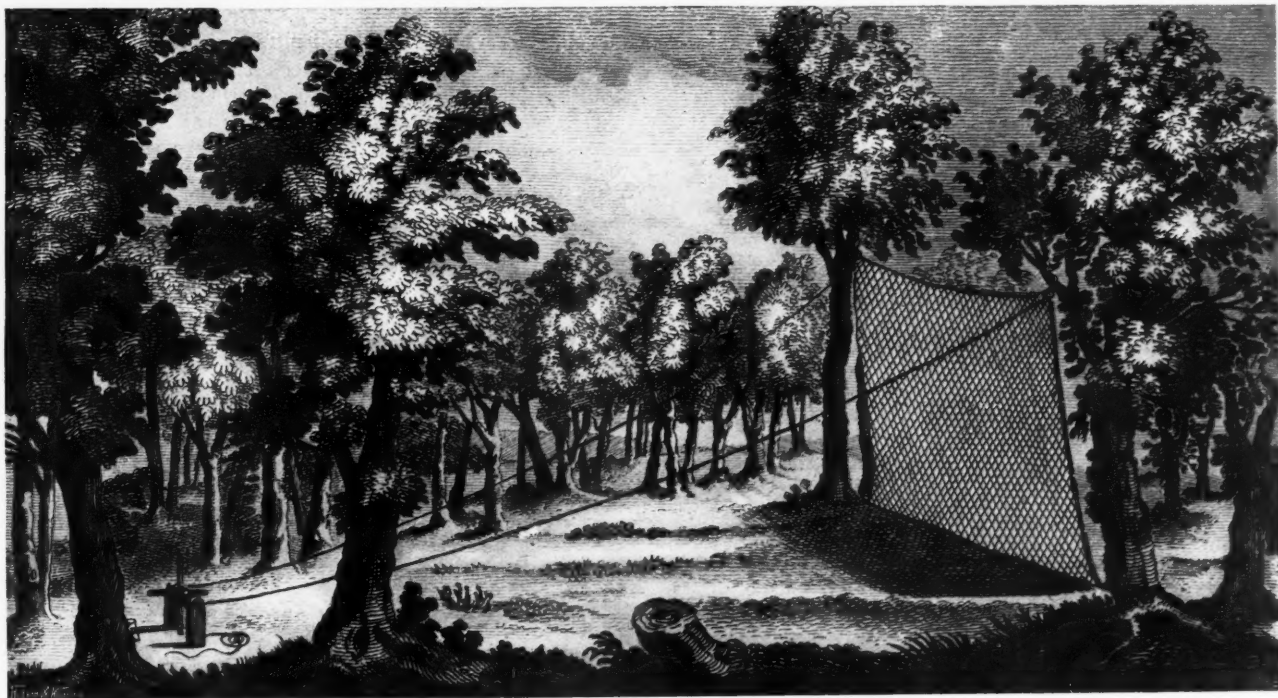


EAGLE-OWL DECOY TRAP.

long ago as before iron or any metal had been pressed into the service of man. Almost all of them must have been in vogue for centuries before the invention of gunpowder. The net, the noose, and the pitfall must be coeval with almost the very earliest appearance of mankind upon the earth.

We reproduce now some prints in which

a rough, and sometimes a sufficiently quaint, illustration is given of some of the traps and snares now obsolete, but highly valued in times long gone by for their merits either in the destruction of dangerous and voracious animals or in the acquisition of game and other quarry for the table. Many of these would be unintelligible to most readers without some sort of explanation as to the manner in which they were worked. Even the descriptions which in some cases are found annexed to the old plates would require some supplemental elucidation, as they generally presuppose in the reader an acquaintance with the elementary principles of the trapper's art, which in the present day is lamentably unusual. They have accordingly been amplified and modernised, so as to suit more nearly the requirements of an age in which the fowler's methods are but little understood.



NET FOR WOODCOCKS.

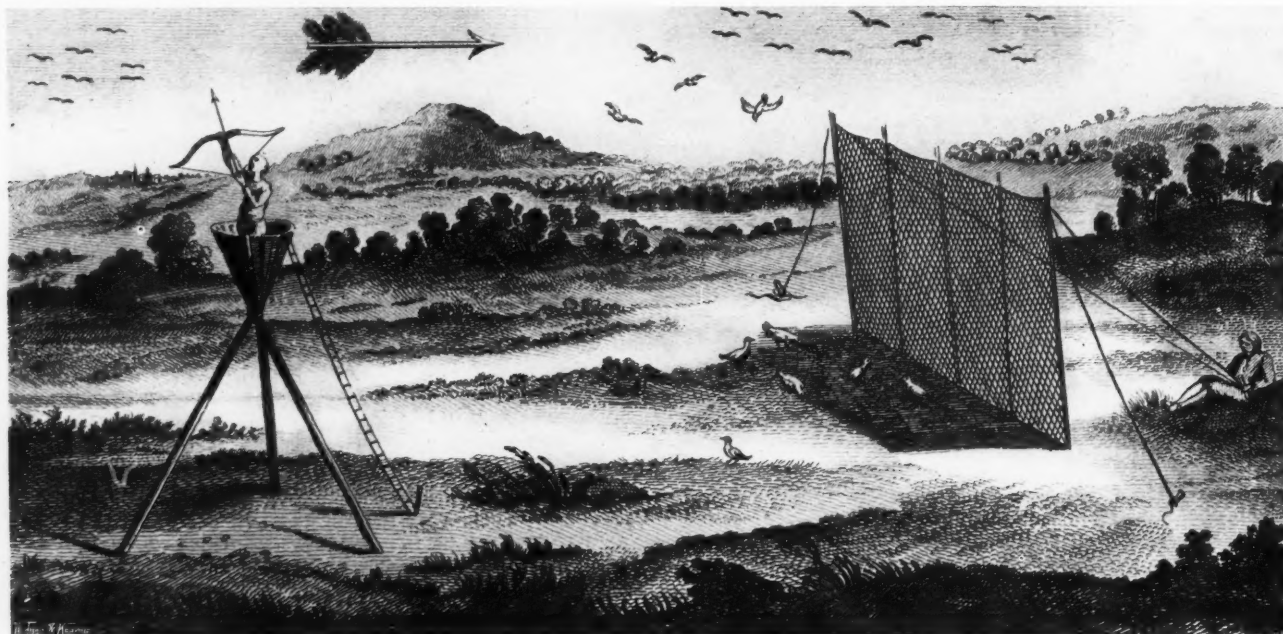
The first illustration shows an antique device, whereby crows and rooks and some other birds were lured on to destruction. An eagle-owl, known to the French as *hibou grand-duc*, and used by falconers as a lure to attract kites for the gerfalcons to fly at, is pegged down near a net which can be drawn over or around him. And when the other birds, who appear to feel an irresistible desire to mob and persecute this queer-looking creature, come and begin to bully him, the trapper, from his hiding-place, pulls the cord which brings down the net upon them.

The second illustration represents a method of netting woodcock, which was at one time even more commonly used than the springes to which Shakespeare in three well-known passages refers as the favourite snare for these proverbially-stupid birds. All who have watched the habits of these nocturnal feeders know that when they fly to their feeding-grounds from the thickets where they spend the day, they make their way along a ride or drive between two rows of trees, thus securing for themselves a



GUN-TRAP OUTSIDE A BURROW.

catcher used to plan destruction for them. A fine net—which would be almost invisible in hazy weather—was stretched from tree to tree across the open space, being attached tightly at its

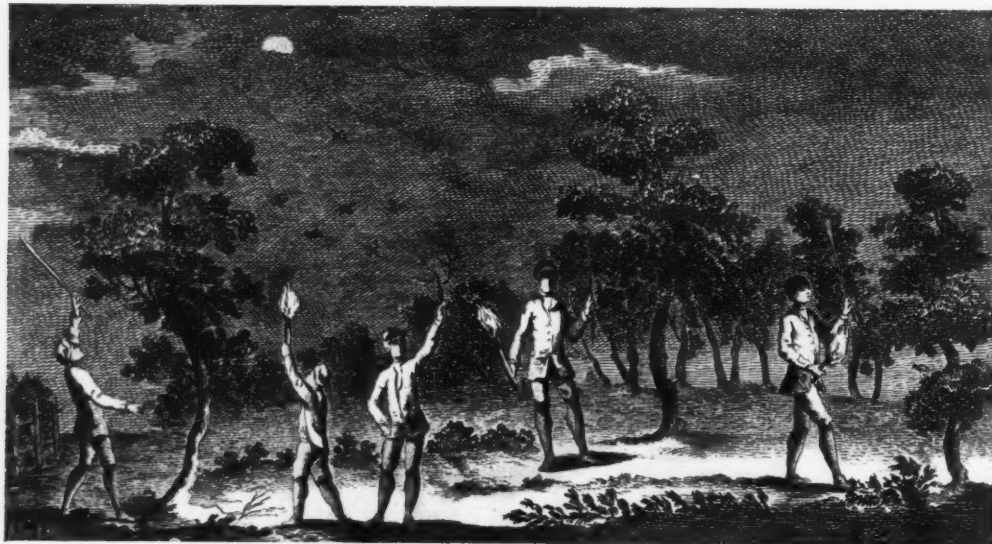


INTIMIDATION BY ARROW.

clear course through the air without the risk of knocking themselves or beating their wing feathers, in the dusk or in foggy weather, against the trunks of the trees in a thickly-grown covert. And it was while on their passage along these glades that the bird-

two lower corners, but more lightly and more cunningly by the two above. When the woodcock in his flight blundered up against the net it fell instantly, and in falling enveloped and carried down with it the unlucky bird. In the plate it appears

clearly that the top corners of the net were hoisted up by cords passing through small rings attached to the tree trunks. The woodcocks were known to be certain to come at it from the side opposite to that where the trapper was lying in wait, and as soon as the victim was seen or heard to dash against the meshes the cords were slacked off, and the net allowed to fall. A rush would then be made to extricate the captive; and the apparatus could immediately be set again by hauling at the cords, so as to be in readiness for a fresh capture. It should, however, be mentioned that a much simpler plan, which was still more commonly used, was to merely hook up the net by its top corners, or the ends of the pole to which it hung, to small pegs driven into the trunks of the trees. Upon these they might be



GREEN-FINCHING.



FATAL THIRST.

made to rest so lightly that a very slight shock would dislodge them; and thus the whole machine would work automatically and instantaneously. The only objection to this more simple method was that there would be some trouble in pulling up the net again to a sufficient height. And if ladders were used, a good deal of time must be wasted, which was a serious drawback, considering that the passage of the woodcocks is only made during about half-an-hour, soon after sunset.

The apparatus figured in the third illustration must have been introduced after the invention of small arms. It was used chiefly for the destruction of "noxious animals"—including, of course, the fox—which live in burrows under the earth. At the entrance of the hole a small platform was arranged, upon which the animal must step if he wanted to sally forth from his den. But the weight of his foot on the platform lowered it, and gave a pull to a string which, being attached at the other end to the trigger of a gun, exploded it, and lodged the contents immediately in the head or heart of the victim.

No modern reader can be expected to understand the curious scene presented in the fourth plate without a few words of explanation. The net, leaning well forward, and the fowler behind it ready to let it fall, are plain enough. But what about the man in the sort of masthead with the longbow? This individual has climbed up there by his ladder, and waits patiently till there are doves or wood-pigeons in the air, probably winging their way to their roosting-place. As soon as they are at a convenient distance he shoots off an arrow, not at them, but in

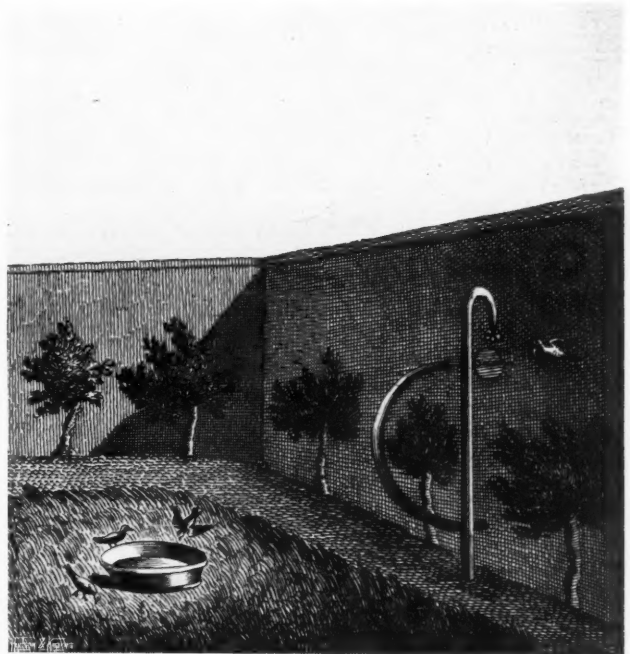


A FULL-GROWN NOOSE-TRAP.

a horizontal direction across the sky. The arrow, it will be observed, is a good stout one, with extraordinarily broad feathers. And the birds, as it is said, are so ready to believe in imaginary dangers that they mistake it for a bird of prey, and rush for shelter under the sloping side of the very net which has been set for their accommodation, and which is allowed in due course to fall upon them.

The sport known as *pinsonnée*, or green-finch, is shown in a quaint scene, representing a group of boys engaged in a nocturnal raid on the bushes where small birds are known to roost. When a noise is made by two of the associates, who beat the bushes with sticks, the birds fly out and go towards the torches which are carried by two others of the conspirators. Between these two is a fifth boy, holding in his hand a branch with twigs, upon which the bewildered birds take perch as the nearest resting-place, only to be mercilessly done to death by blows with the rods or wands carried by the torch-bearers and the beaters.

The next illustration shows a mode of catching many sorts of birds newly fledged, as they come to drink at a watering-place artificially constructed for their delectation and ultimate capture. The trench to be filled with water is dug some time before, while the young birds are still in the nest or in the egg. Their suspicions are not, therefore, aroused by finding that such a convenient drinking-place has suddenly appeared where it had not been seen before. The old birds are too wary to have anything to do with it. But the warnings which they doubtless attempt to give to their offspring do not avail against the greediness of these latter, who resort to it freely when the hot



ENCLOSURE AND TRAP FOR JAYS.

suns of July induce in them a healthy thirst. The net is so set on the far side of the ditch or pool that it will fall forwards as soon as the sticks which hold it back are pulled away from the stumps against which they are lightly rested at the other end. The bird-catcher conceals himself at a distance of not less than fifty yards, and when he sees his victims collected in sufficient numbers on the brink of the pool, pulls the string, and allows the net to fall by its own weight over their heads.

There was a time when the jay—now one of the shyest of creatures—owned a less suspicious, not to say a confiding, disposition. The illustration represents an enclosure walled in with nets, in which is placed a pan or dish filled with oil. The jays come down to bathe in this, and, having done so, are so heavy in flight, with feathers clogged by the oil, that they cannot at the first attempt get over the barrier. They accordingly take perch on the twigs or small perches, with which the interior of the fence is provided. And this perch is so arranged that when the bird's feet rest on it a noose is released which strings up the luckless jay.

The snare depicted in the last picture looks like a mole-trap, or wire for hares on a magnified scale. Its size, and the formidable dimensions of the bent branch which serves as the spring to draw tight the noose, show that it was used not only for such minor quarry as foxes and roe deer, but also animals as big as wolves and wild boars, and, according to some accounts, red deer. There can be no doubt that in the tropics such snares have been employed time out of mind for the destruction or capture of innumerable wild beasts of almost all sorts and sizes.

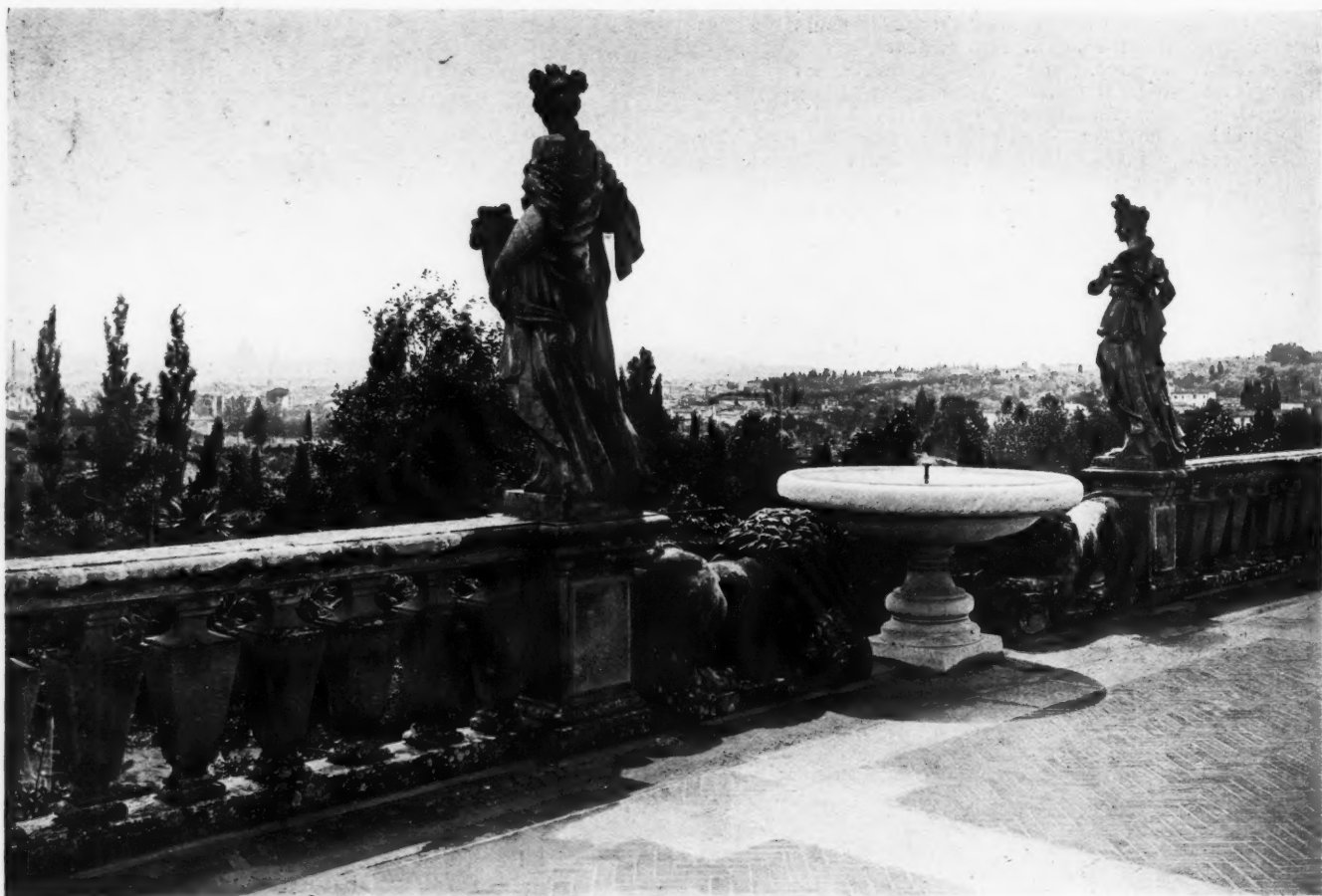


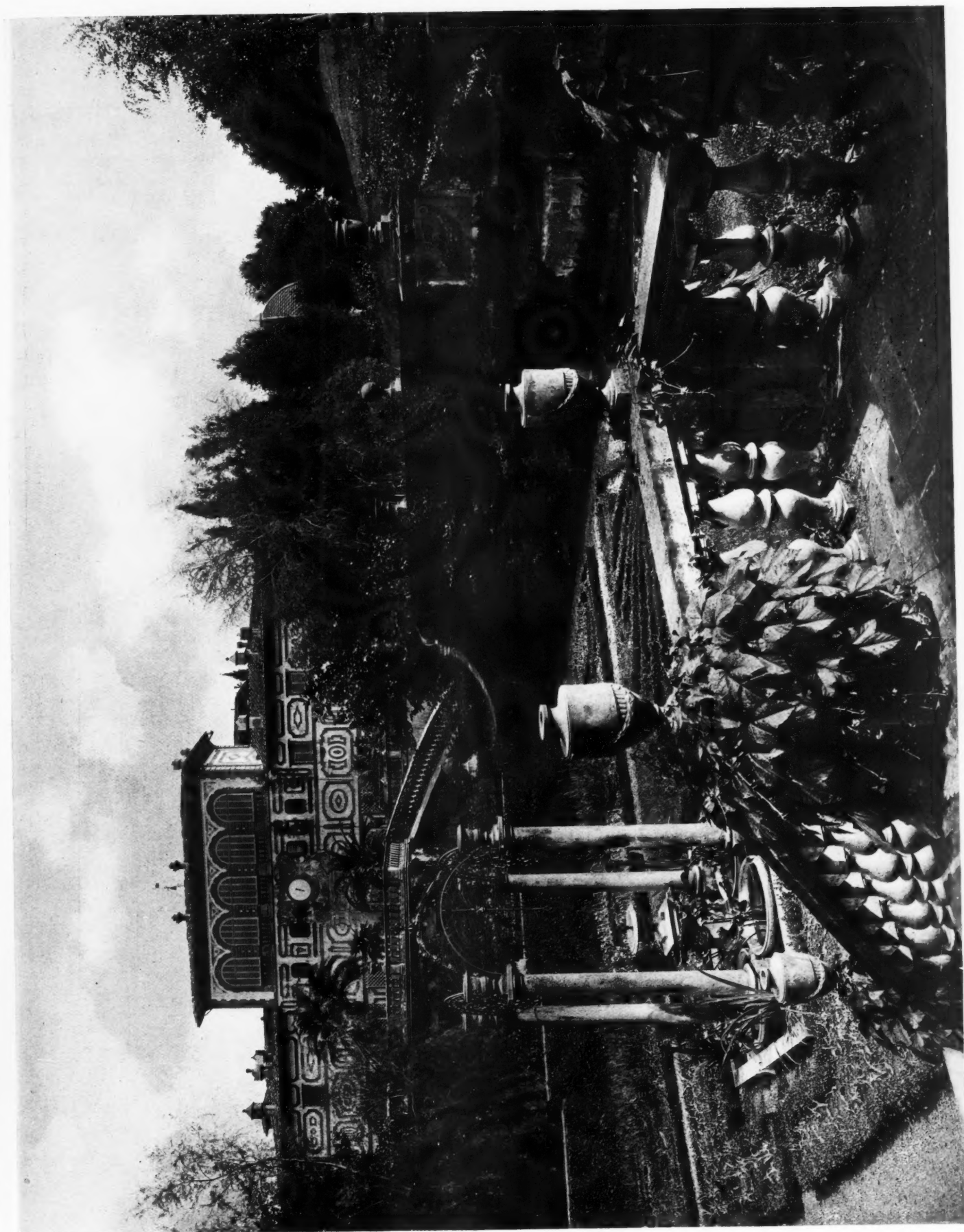
THE author of the immortal "Decameron," the founder of who can say how many modern novels, is believed to have been born by the river Mensola, near Settignano. The villa, which belonged to his father, has been identified by a contract of sale existing in the archives of Florence and dated 1336, when Giovanni Boccaccio was twenty-three years old. This villa, now called Villa Boccaccio, still lies on the hill above Villa Palmieri. Some old frescoes were found lately, in restoring it. All over this fertile land, which must have been almost as thickly studded with habitations in his day, as it is now, the romancer wandered, marrying fiction to reality. He wrote the famous volume of stories of the patient Griselda, of Romeo and Juliet, of Isabella and her pot of Basil; stories from which Chaucer and Shakespeare and Keats—and who shall say how many others?—have borrowed through the centuries. And, after more than five hundred years, it is still possible to identify the scenes in which he laid them.

Boccaccio was thirty-five the year the great plague came to Florence, where it ravaged and destroyed, and struck such terror, "that the laws of God and man were no more regarded." Some lived licentiously, some temperately, some fled from the city. There was no one to nurse the sick, and numbers passed out of the world without even a witness. In the country, the animals were left to roam at will, no one cared to reap the standing corn. Between March and July 100,000 souls perished in the city alone. "What noble palaces were then depopulated to the last inhabitant, what families became extinct! What

vast possessions were left, and no known heir to inherit them!" He frames his tales in the device of a joyous company of seven ladies, "all discreet, nobly descended, and perfectly accomplished," who met in Santa Maria Novella, where they agreed to take their maids and to retire to the country seat of one or the other, and were speedily joined by three gentlemen, in whom neither the adversity of the times, nor the loss of friends, nor even fear for themselves, could stifle, or indeed cool, the passion of love. "They accordingly set out next day from the city, and, after they had travelled two short miles, came to the place they had already decided upon." This first halt has been identified as Poggio Gherardo, lying above Settignano. It is an old castellated house, standing high above the plain. The entrance-hall is the Loggia mentioned in the Decameron: "The said place was on a small height, removed from roads on every side, full of various trees and shrubs in full greenery and most pleasant to behold. On the brow of the hill was a palace with a fine and spacious courtyard in the middle, and with loggie and halls and rooms, all and each one in itself beautiful and ornamented with jocund paintings; surrounded with marvellous gardens and with wells of coldest water and cellars of rare wines; a thing more suited to curious toppers than to sober and virtuous women."

Here one of the ladies, Pampinea, was crowned queen, "with an honourable and beautiful garland of bays." Though this is a graceful fiction, Boccaccio had probably some real lady, a leader of Florentine society, in his mind. It was very usual to select some lady whose word for the time was law, and who





"COUNTRY LIFE."

VILLA PALMIERA.



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ORANGERY OF THE VILLA.

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LOGGIA OF THE PLEASANCE.

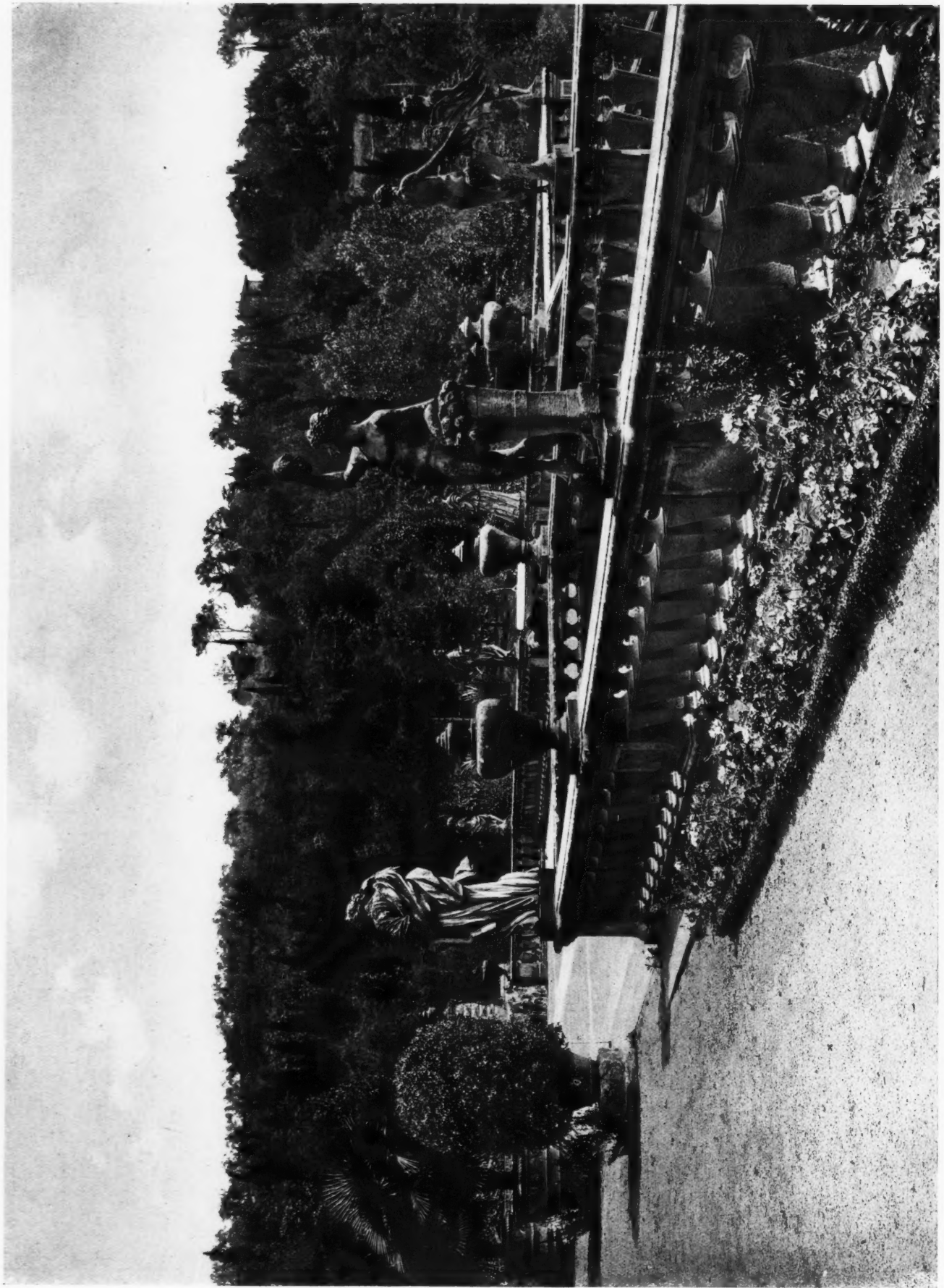
"COUNTRY LIFE."



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THE WESTERN STAIRWAY.

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"COUNTRY LIFE"

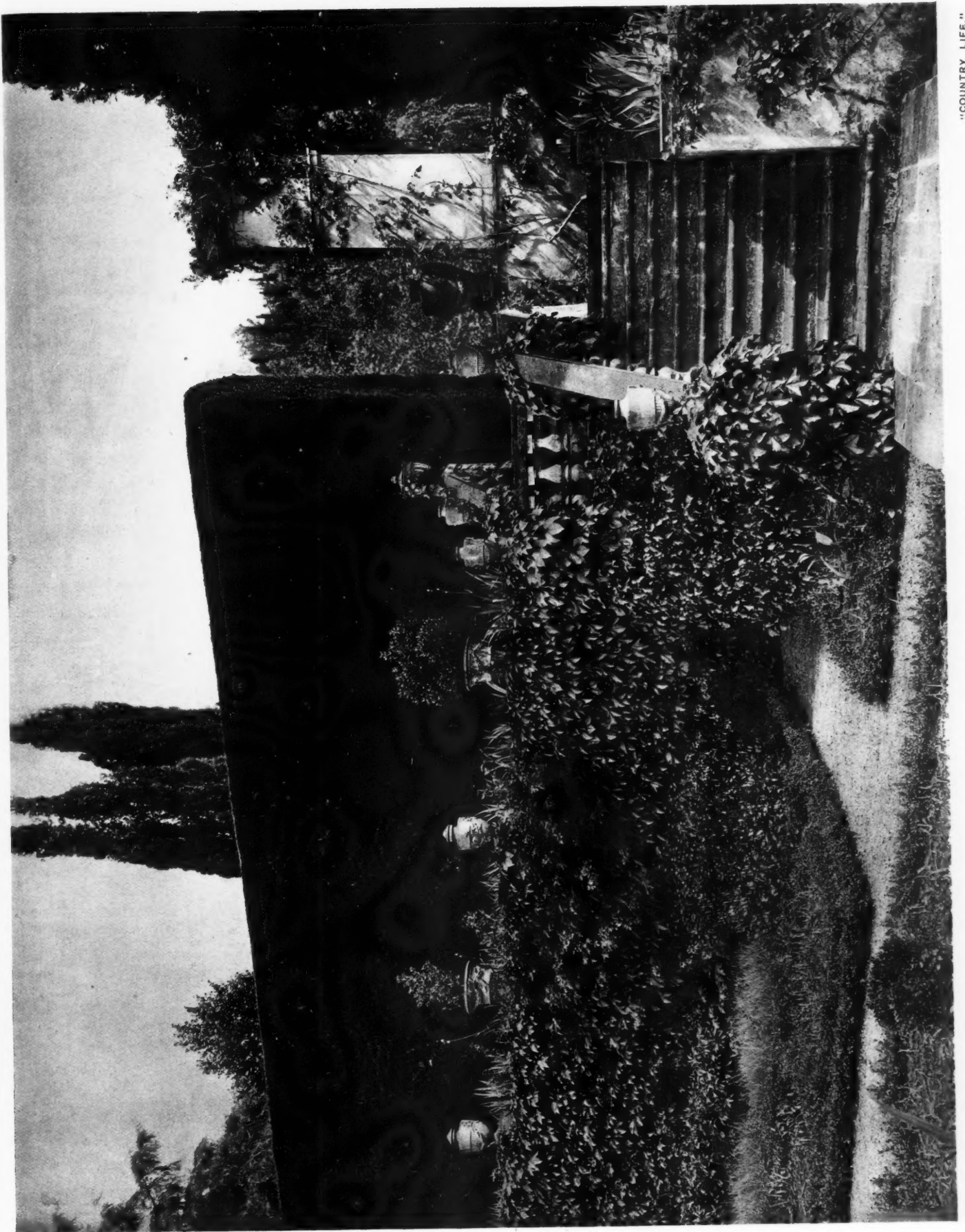
THE SOUTHERN TERRACE.

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THE SOUTHERN TERRACE.

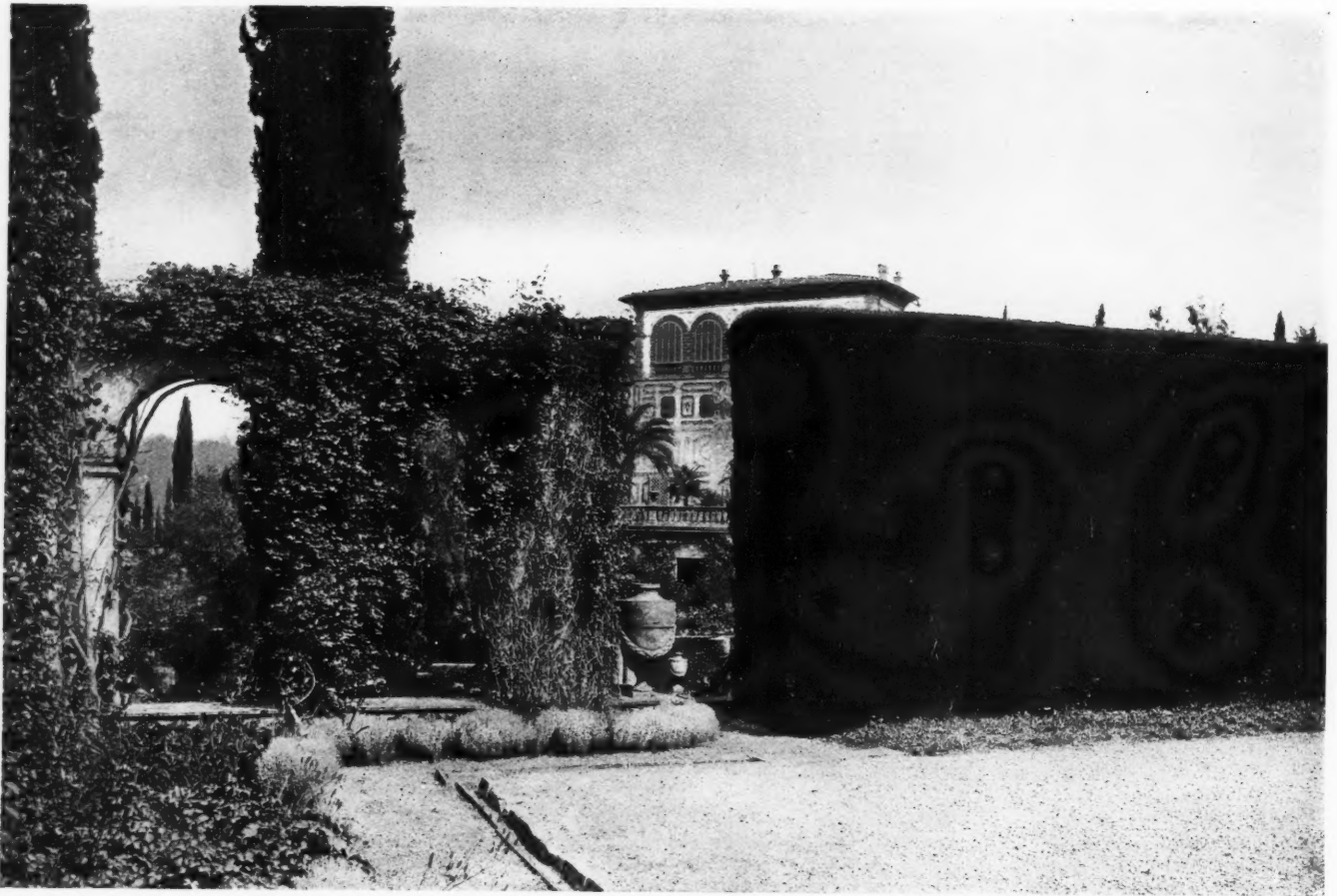
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IN THE PLEASANCE.

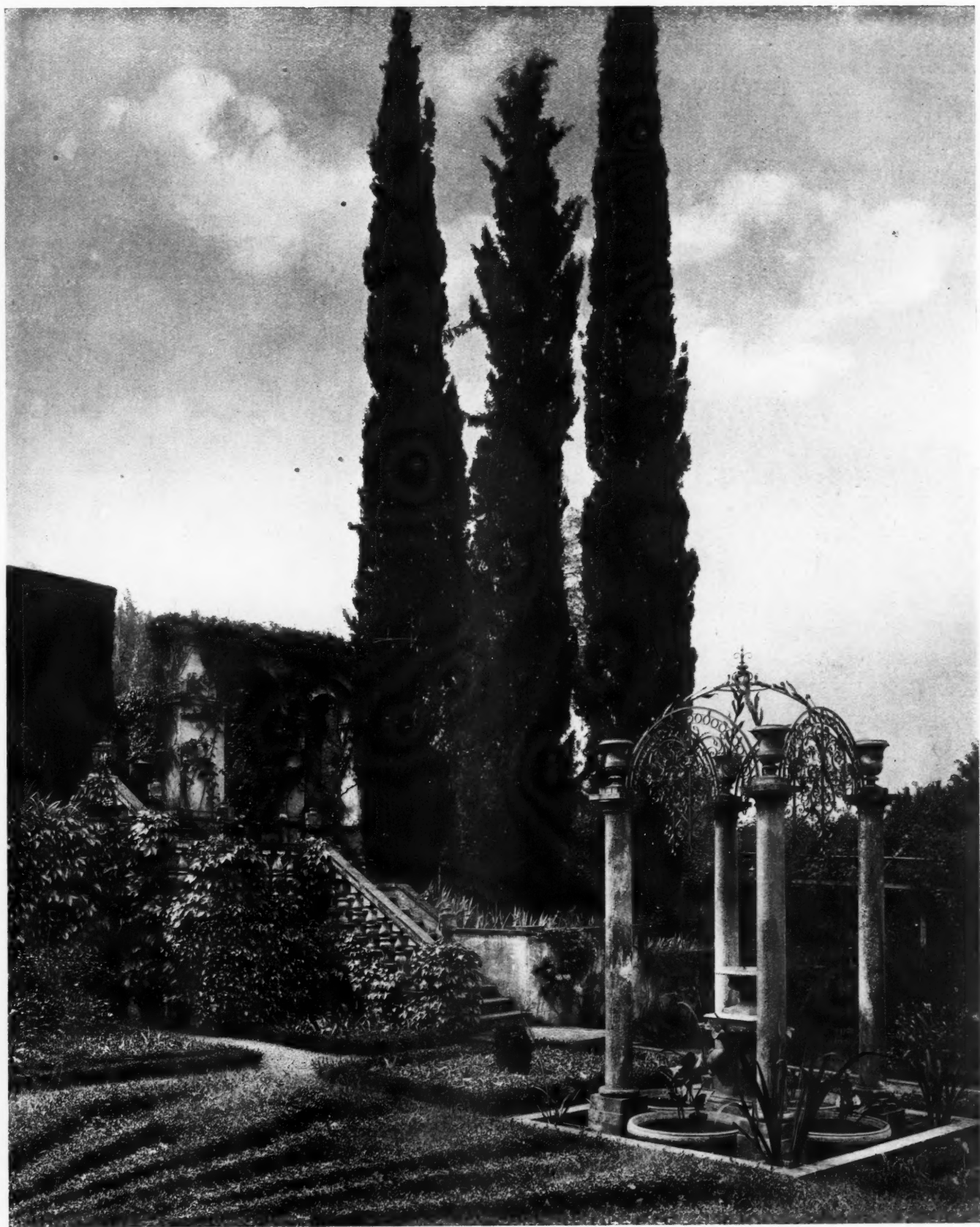
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LOGGIA AND FISH-POND.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



Copyright.

THE SENTINELS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

settled the way in which the hours should be spent. Strolling in the country in philosophical discussion, and gathering at some spring or charming point of view to tell tales, were a part of the proceedings.

Here, then, the first series of those tales was supposed to be told; and the Mensola, flowing below, is that "stream of clear water" to which the joyous company went slowly down to disport themselves at evening, barefooted and with bare arms, till they returned to the palace for supper, music, and dancing.

A fresh queen was chosen each day, and at the end of the second day, Neifile, being crowned, said, "As you know, to-morrow is Friday, and the next day Saturday, days apt to be tedious to most people on account of the viands ordered to be eaten; besides, Friday was the day on which He who died for our life, suffered His passion, and it is therefore worthy of reverence. For thus, I consider it to be a proper and virtuous thing that we should rather say prayers to the worship of God than invent tales. And on Saturday it is the custom for women to wash their heads. . . . Being therefore unable on that day to fully carry out our established order of life, I think it would be well done to refrain from reciting tales on that day. And as we

of the season, whither the master of the household brought wine and sweetmeats for their refreshment.

"They were now shown into the garden, which was on one side of the palace, and walked about. All round and through the midst of it were broad, straight walks flanked with vines. . . . The sides of these walks were closed with white and red roses and jasmine in such a manner as to exclude the morning and even the midday sun. . . . In the midst, what seemed more delightful than anything else was a plot of ground like a meadow, the grass of deep green, spangled with a thousand different flowers, and set round with orange and cedar trees. . . . In the centre of this meadow was a fountain of white marble, beautifully carved. . . . a jet of water spurted up which made a most agreeable sound in its fall; the water which came thence, ran through the meadow by a secret passage, and was carried to every part of the garden, uniting in one stream at its going out, and falling with such force into the plain as to turn two mills." Boccaccio is evidently painting the villa as he knew it. The two mills still exist, but were rebuilt after being destroyed in a flood of the Mugnone in 1409. The life his youths and ladies lived, walking about, discoursing, and wearing chaplets of flowers, feasting by the side of a fountain, singing



Copyright.

PILASTERS OF CYPRESS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

shall then have been here four days, if we are desirous to avoid being joined by others, I conceive it would be more opportune to quit this place and go elsewhere, and I have already thought of a place, and arranged everything."

"So when Sunday came, the queen, with slow steps and accompanied and followed by her ladies and by the three youths, and led by the song of maybe twenty nightingales and other birds, took her way towards the west by an unfrequented lane. . . . Gossiping, joking, and laughing with her company, she led them to a beautiful and splendid palace."

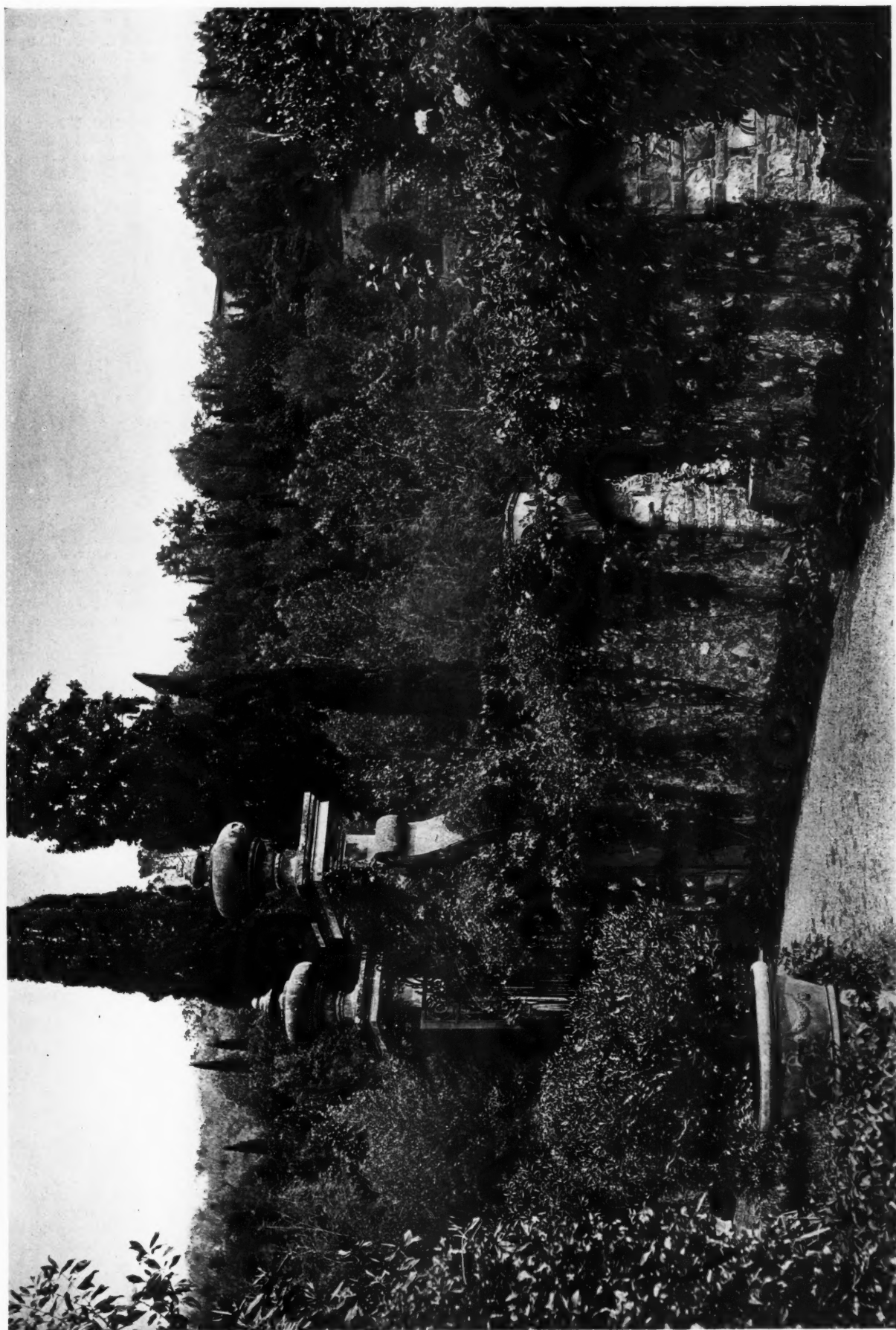
The "unfrequented lane" may still be followed, and passing by it from Majano to San Dominico, we reach the Villa Palmieri, which then bore the name of Schifanoja, or "banish care," where Boccaccio's fancy pictured the remainder of the tales being told. "The palace was seated on an eminence in the middle of a large plain. When they had entered and seen the great hall and the chambers most elegantly fitted up, they greatly extolled it, judging its lord to be truly a magnificent person. Going afterwards below stairs and observing the spacious and pleasant court, the cellars stored with the richest wines, and delicate springs of water everywhere running, they extolled it yet more. Thence they went to rest in an open gallery which overlooked the court, set out with all the flowers

and dancing, reading and playing chess, and after supper going to the meadow by the fountain-side to tell stories, was the way in which much of that society was carried on, when the need of noble forms of social intercourse was as strongly felt as it was in the early Renaissance; and we have a real and charming picture of a highly-cultured, if pagan, company, which carried the art of getting the best out of life to its highest point, and

"Wandering in idleness, but not in folly,
Sate down in the high grass and in the shade
Of many a tree, sun-proof—day after day,
When all was still and nothing to be heard
But the cicala's voice among the olives,
Relating in a ring, to banish care,
Their hundred tales."

The villa belonged at that time to Cioni de' Fini; the Tolomei bought it soon after, and sold it in the fifteenth century to Matteo Palmieri, and by a descendant of his, in 1670, it was rebuilt, and called by his own name. The high road to Fiesole at that time ran across where the grand terrace now stretches, and was only cleared away when the Earl of Crawford bought the villa in 1874.

Villa Palmieri during the last two centuries was a great favourite with English people. In 1766, Lord Cowper came



"COUNTRY LIFE."

PART OF CIRCULAR WALK.

Copyright.

here, and, with his wife, who had been the beautiful Miss Gore, found it so enchanting that they made it their home; and Sir Horace Mann, in his letters, gives an account of their brilliant entertainments, and of the admiration of the Italian people, high and low, for the young and lovely Countess. From 1824, an eccentric lady, Miss Mary Farhill, lived in it for thirty years. She left it to the Grand Duchess Marie Antoinette de Bourbon, and in 1874 it passed into the hands of Lord Crawford. In 1888, and again in 1893, Lady Crawford lent her beautiful villa to Queen Victoria. Many people recall the interest that was aroused by the sight of the English Queen, driving about the country near, and expressing the greatest pleasure at her stay.

In the National Gallery is an interesting picture of the Assumption of Our Lady, attributed by Vasari to Botticelli, but now considered to be a school painting. It has "an infinite number of figures, with the zones of the heavens, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Doctors, the Virgins, and the Hierarchies." On either side at the foot, kneel the donor, Matteo Palmieri, and his wife, Cosa Serragli. The picture was painted for the Palmieri Chapel in San Pietro Maggiore, but the owner of Villa Palmieri, who was a very learned man, an accomplished scholar, and a friend of Cosimo de Medici, had offended the Church by writing a poem, "*Citta della Vita*," which was pronounced to contain heretical opinions on the subject of angels. The

poem was not even published, but its contents being made known after its author's death, the tribunal of the Inquisition wanted to disinter the corpse and burn it together with the manuscript. Fortunately, the Republic would not give up either, and the MS. is now one of the treasures of the Laurentian Library. The picture was ordered to be removed from the chapel, and was taken to the old scholar's villa and walled up for safety. It was only discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Examining it in the National Gallery, it is easy to see traces of stabs and cuts upon the donor and his wife, inflicted by the zeal of the faithful when it yet hung in the Palmieri Chapel.

Under its present owner, Lady Crawford, Villa Palmieri is as fascinating a resort as you could find for spring and summer days and nights. Its wide bricked terrace, with a balustrade and statues, looking out over the Val d'Arno, would seem the very place for the gathering together of a company of congenial spirits. The double stairway, with its fine, graceful sweep, was built by Palmieri's descendant in 1670; it is overgrown with creepers, and the air is heavy with perfume. It leads to the flower garden, which has a wall in which round openings at intervals frame exquisite views, and below the ground falls away into wild and distant walks, where irises grow in spring-time, and where such nightingales sing as might have heralded the coming of Pampinea and her goodly company.

BEYOND THE BLUE SEPTENTRIONS.

TWO LEGENDS OF THE POLAR STARS.

BY FIONA MACLEOD.

THE star Septentrion is, for the peoples of the North and above all for the shepherd, the seaman and the wayfarer, the star of stars. A hundred legends embody its mystery, its steadfast incalculable service, its unswerving isolation over the Pole, Polaris, the North Star, the Pole-Star, the Lodestar, the Seaman's Star, the Star of the Sea, the Gate of Heaven, Phœnice, Cynosure, how many names, in all languages, at all times. The Mongolian nomad called it the Imperial Ruler of Heaven: the Himalayan shepherd Grahadāra, the Pivot of the Planets: the Arab knows it as the Torch of Prayer, burning for ever at the portal of the heavenly Mecca. It shines through all literature, since (and indeed long before) Euripides wrote his superb verse of how the two great Northern constellations which encircle Polaris, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, the two "swift-wandering" Bears, 'guard the Atlantean Pole,' till a poet of our own time wrote the less majestic but not less lovely line relating to these constellations which gives the title to this paper. In all ages, too, the dreaming mind of man has imagined here the Throne of the Gods, the Seat of the Mighty, the last Portal of the Unknown. It is the Flatheanas of our Gaelic ancestors, the ultimate goal of the heroic spirit: the Himinbiorg or Hill of Heaven of the Norsemen of old, and the abode of Heimdallr, the guardian of the bridge Bifröst (the Rainbow) which unites Asgard the Everlasting with that brief whirling phantom, the Earth: Albordy, "the dazzling mountain on which was held the Assembly of the Gods" of the ancient Teutonic peoples: the mysterious Mount Meru, the seat of the gods, of the Aryan dreamers of old, and the Hindû sages of later time: "the holy mountain of God" alluded to in *Ezekiel*—so, at least, it has been surmised.

"The blue Septentrions" . . . Boötes with Arcturus, the Great Bear, the Lesser Bear, the Pointers or the Northern Hounds, the North Star . . . what legend, what poetry, what romance, what wonder belongs to these stars and constellations which guard the marches of the Arctic North. To the mass of what is already extant, what need to add further matter? And yet there is eternal justification in that old need of the soul to hear over and over again and in ever-varying ways even the most fragmentary runes or sagas of this unfathomably mysterious stellar universe which encloses us with Silence and Beauty and Wonder, the three Veils of God—as the Hebridean islesman, the Irish Gael of the dreaming west, and the Arab of the Desert alike have it.

In a prior paper, last year, I spoke of the legendary association of Arthur (the Celtic-British King and the earlier mythical Arthur, semi-divine, and at last remote and celestial) with Arcturus, that lovely Lamp of the North, the glory of Boötes. But now, I may add what then I had to omit.

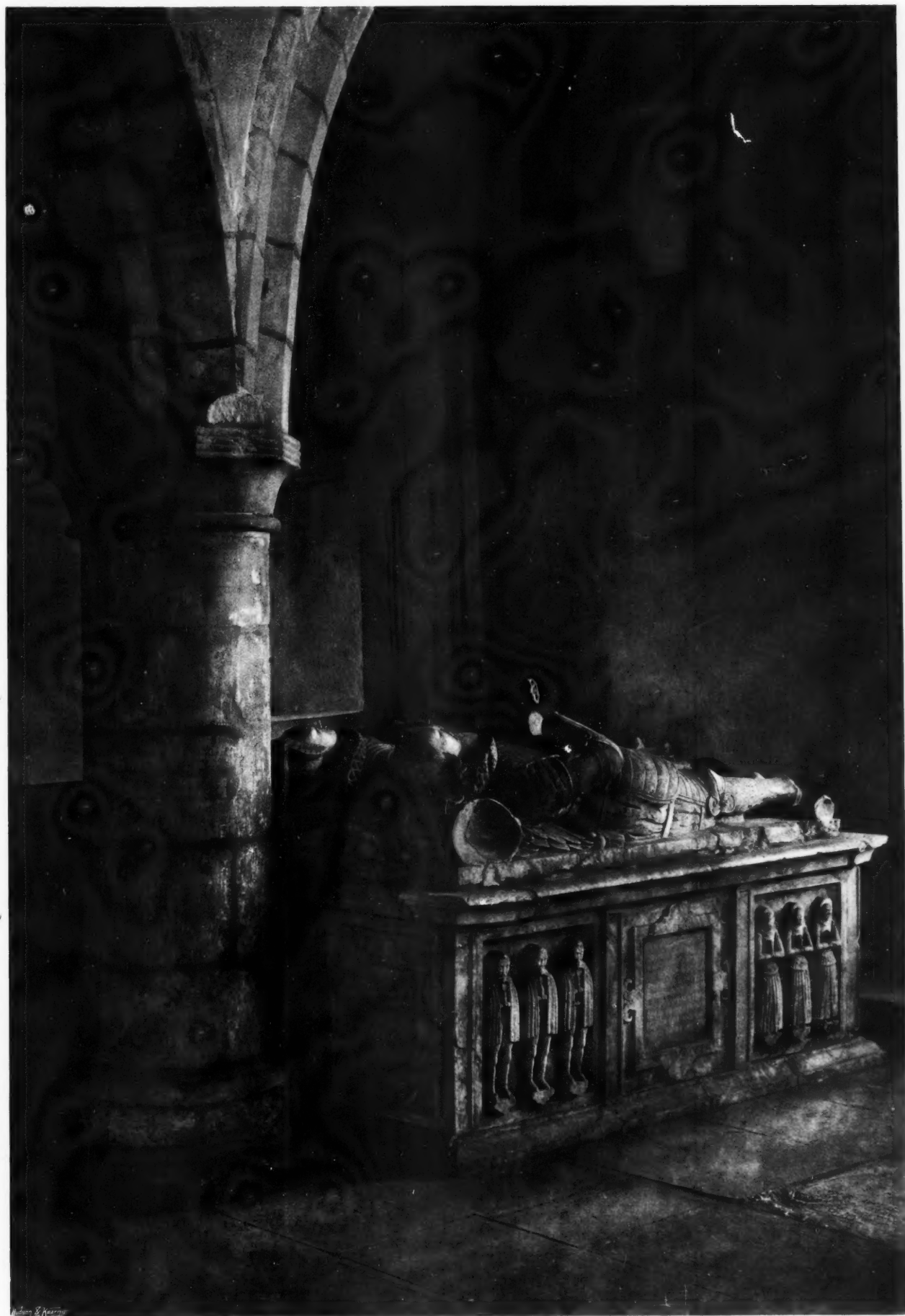
In all European lands, and above all in the countries of the West, there is none without its legend of King Arthur. The Bretons claim him as theirs, and the places of his passage and exploit are familiar, though only the echo, only the phantom of a great fame ever reached Arvör. In the Channel and Scilly Isles the story runs that here is Lyonesse and that Arthur sleeps in a cavern of the seas. The Cornish folk and their kindred of

Somerset and Devon, believe there is not a rood of ground between Camelot and Tintagel where the great King has not dwelt or passed. Wales calls him her son, and his chivalry her children, and the Cymric poets of a thousand mabinogion have sung his heroic fame. Clydesdale, that more ancient home of the Cymri, has dim memories older than what Taliesin sang: Arthur's Seat hangs above Edinburgh, a city so old that a thousand years ago its earlier name was forgotten: and from the Sidlaw to the Ochil, from blue Demyat to grey Schiehallion, old names and broken tradition preserve the obscure trails of a memory fallen into oblivion, but not so fallen that the names of Arthur and Queen Guinevere and wild-eyed Merlin of the Woods have ceased to stir the minds of the few who still care for the things that moved our fathers from generation to generation. The snows of the Grampians have not stayed the wandering tale: and there are still a few old people who recall at times, in the winter story-telling before farm-kitchen fires, how the fierce Modred, King of the North, made Queen Gwannoné his own, and how later, in a savage revenge, Arthur condemned her to be torn asunder by wild horses. Lancelot passes from the tale before it crosses the Border, and as it goes north (or is it not that as it comes south?) Merlin is no more a courtier but a wild soothsayer of the woods, Queen Wanders or Gwannoné or Guinevere is tameless as a hawk, and Arthur himself, though a hero and great among his kind, is of the lineage of fire and sword.

Where is Joyeuse Gard? Some say it is in the isle Avillion off the Breton shores: some say it is in Avalon, under the sacred hill of Glastonbury: some that it is wet with the foam of Cornish Seas: some that it lies in fathomless silence under the wandering wave and plunging tide: some that it leaned once upon the sea from some lost haven under Berwick Law, perhaps where North Berwick now is, or where Dirleton looks across to Fidra, or where the seamews on ruined Tantallon scream to the Bass.

Arthur himself has a sleeping-place (for nowhere is he dead, but sleeps, awaiting a trumpet-call) in "a lost land" in Provence, in Spain, under the waters of the Rhine. To-day one may hear from Calabrian shepherd or Sicilian fisherman that the great King sleeps in a deep hollow underneath the Straits of Messina. And strangest of all (if not a new myth of the dreaming imagination, for I have not been able to trace the legend beyond a modern Slavonic ballad) among the Carpathian Highlands is a nameless ancient tomb lost in a pine-forest, where at mid-winter a bear has been seen to rise, walking erect like a man, crowned with a crown of iron and gold holding a single shining stone magnificent as the Pole Star, and crying in a deep voice, "*I am Arthur of the West, who shall yet be King of the World.*"

Strange indeed, for here among the débris of the lost history of Arthur, that vast shadowy kingly figure whose only kingdom may have been the soul of primitive races, and whose sword may have been none other than the imagination that is for ever on its beautiful and perilous quest, here among that débris of legend scattered backward from the realms of the north across Europe



A. Marshall,

THE LAST SLEEP.

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is one, remote as it is, which brings us back to the early astronomical myth which identifies the great Celtic champion with the chief constellation of the north.

But as I have heard this fragment of our old lost mythology related in a way I have not seen in any book, I will give it here altered but slightly if at all from one of the countless legends told to me in my childhood.

At sunset the young son of the great King Pendragon came over the brow of a hill that stepped forward from a dark company of mountains and leaned over the shoreless sea which fills the west and drowns the north. All day he had been wandering alone, his mind heavy with wonder over many things. He had heard strange tales of late, tales about his heroic father and the royal clan, and how they were not as other men, but half divine. They were not gods, he knew, for they could be slain in battle or could die with the crowding upon them of many years: but they were more terrible in battle than were the greatest of men, and they had vision and knowledge beyond the vision and knowledge of the druids, and were lordly beyond all men in mien and the beauty of courtesy, and lived beyond the common span of years, and had secret communion with the noble and invisible company. He had heard, too, of his destiny: that he, too, was to be a great king, as much greater than Pendragon, than Pendragon was above all the kings of the world. What was "destiny," he wondered. Then, again, he turned over and over in his mind all the names he could think of that he might choose for his own: for the time was come for him to put away the name of his childhood and to take on that by which he should be known among men.

He came over the brow of the hill, and out of the way of the mountain-wind, and, being tired, lay down among the heather and stared across the grey wilderness of the sea. The sun set, and the invisible throwers of the nets trailed darkness across the waves and up the wild shores and over the faces of the cliffs. Stars climbed out of shadowy abysses, and the great chariots of the constellations rode from the west to the east and from the north to the south. His eyes closed, but when he opened them again to see if a star quivering on the verge of the horizon had in that brief moment sprung like a deer above the drowning wave or had sunk like a white seabird passing out of sight, he saw a great and kingly figure standing beside him. So great in stature, so splendid in kingly beauty was the mysterious one who had so silently joined him, that he thought this must be one of the gods.

"Do you not know me, my son?" said the kingly stranger.

The boy looked at him in awe and wonder, but unconsciously.

"Do you not know me, my son?" he heard again . . . "for I am your father Pendragon. But my home is yonder, and there I go before long, and that is why I have come to you as a vision in a dream . . ." and, as he spoke, he pointed to the constellation of the *Arth*, or Bear, which nightly prowls through the vast abysses of the polar sky.

When the boy turned his gaze from the great constellation which hung in the dark wilderness overhead, he saw that he was alone again. While he yet wondered in great awe at what he had seen and heard, he felt himself float like a mist and become like a cloud, and, as a cloud, rise beyond the brows of the hills, and ascend the invisible stairways of the sky.

When for minutes that were as hours he had moved thus mysteriously into the pathless and unvisited realms of the air, he saw that he had left the highest clouds like dust on a valley-road after one has climbed to the summit of a mountain: nor could he see the earth save as a blind and obscure thing that moved between the twilights of night and dawn.

It seemed to him thereafter that a swoon came over him, in which he passed beyond the far-off blazing fires of strange stars. At last, suddenly, he stood on the verge of *Arth*, or *Arth Uthyr*, the Great Bear. There he saw, with the vision of immortal not of mortal eyes, a company of most noble and majestic figures seated at what he thought a circular abyss but which had the semblance of a vast table. Each of these seven great knights or lordly kings had a star upon his forehead, and these were the stars of the mighty constellation of the Bear which the boy had seen night after night from his home among the mountains by the sea.

It was with a surging throb at his heart that he recognised in the King of all these kings no other than himself.

While he looked, in amazement so great that he could hear the pulse of his heart, as in the silence of a wood one hears the tapping of a woodpecker, he saw this mighty phantom-self rise till he stood towering over all there, and heard a voice as though an ocean rose and fell through the eternal silences.

"Comrades in God," it said, "the time is come when that which is great shall become small."

And when the voice was ended, the mighty figure faded into the blue darkness, and only a great star shone where the uplifted dragon-helm had brushed the roof of heaven. One by one the white lords of the sky followed in his mysterious way, till once more were to be seen only the stars of the Bear.

The boy-king dreamed that he fell as a falling meteor, and then that he floated over land and sea as a cloud, and then that he sank as mist upon the hills of his own land.

A noise of wind stirred in his ears, and he felt the chill dew creep over his hands like the stealthy cold lip of the tide. He rose stumblingly, and stood, staring around him. He was on the same spot, under the brow of the hill that looked over the dim shoreless seas, now obscure with the dusk. He glanced upward and saw the stars of the Great Bear in their slow majestic march round the Pole. Then he remembered.

He went slowly down the hillside, his mind heavy with thought. When he was come to the place of the King his father, lo, Pendragon and all his fierce chivalry came out to meet him, for the archdruid had foretold that the great King to be had received his mystic initiation among the holy silence of the hills.

"I am no more Snowbird the child," the boy said, looking at them fearlessly, and as though already King. "Henceforth I am *Arth-Uthyr*, for my place is in the Great Bear which we see yonder in the north."

So all there acclaimed him as Arthur, the wondrous one of the stars, the Great Bear.

"I am old," said Pendragon, "and soon you shall be King, Arthur my son. So ask now a great boon of me and it shall be granted to you."

Then Arthur remembered his dream.

"Father and King," he said, "when I am King after you I shall make a new order of knights, who shall be strong and pure as the Immortal Ones, and be tender as women, and simple as little children. But first I ask of you seven flawless virgin knights to be of my chosen company. To-morrow let the wood-wrights make for me a round dais or table such as that where we eat our roasted meats and drink from the ale-horns but round and of a size whereat I and my chosen knights may sit at ease."

The King listened, and all there.

"So be it," said the King.

Then Arthur chose the seven flawless virgin knights, and called them to him.

"Ye are now Children of the Great Bear," he said, "and comrades and liegemen to me, Arthur, who shall be King of the West. And ye shall be known as the Knights of the Round Table. But no man shall make a mock of that name and live: and in the end that name shall be so great in the mouths and minds of men that they shall consider no glory of the world to be so great as to be the youngest and frailest of that knighthood."

And that is how Arthur, the son of Pendragon, who three years later became King of the West, read the Rune of the Stars that are called the Great Bear, and took their name upon him, and from the strongest and purest and noblest of the land made Knighthood, such as the world had not seen, such as the world since has not known.

Very different, a cruder legend of the Polestar, the drift of which I heard some months ago from a fisherman of Ross, 'foregathered with' in the Sound of Morvern.

One day, Finn, before he was born the King of the West, a thousand years earlier than that and maybe thousands more on the top of that thousand, went hunting a great bear beyond the highest mountains in Ross and Sutherland. It came to the Ord, and then, seeing there was no more land, it went into the sea with an awesome plunge, like Iceland in the story before it swam away from Scotland, so that the fish were knocked out of the nets and the fishing cobses were thrown on the shores like buckies, and the tides ran like hares till they leaped into the sea again at the rocks of Wick and over Cromarty Cliffs. Aye, it is said a green wave ran right through the great Kirk at Inverness, and that away across the lands of Mackenzie and Chisholm, of Fraser and Gordon, a storm of foam blew like snow against the towers and steeples of Aberdeen. At least all this might well have been, if in those old ancient days there had been any Aberdeen or Inverness to see it, or if there were cobses and nets then, as, for all you or I or the wind know, there may have been. Well, the Bear swam away due north, and Finn after it and his great hounds Luath and Dorch. It took them a month to come up with it, and then it was among mountains of solid ice with the sea between hard as granite. Then it came to the place where there's an everlasting Rainbow. The Bear climbed this, to jump to the other side of the Pole, but Luath ran up one side and Dorch the other and Finn hurled his great shining spears, one after the other: so that down the Bear came with a rush, and so great was the noise and stramash that the icebergs melted, and out flew thousands of solanders and grey swans and scarts and God knows what all, every kind of bird that is with a web to its foot. The hounds fell into the water, and the Bear lay on a floe like a wounded seal, but Finn never moved an inch but put spear after spear into the Bear. "Well, you're dead now," he said; "and

* Pronounced *Arth-Uir*, or *Arth-Ur*. In ancient British *Arth* means Bear, and *Uthyr* great, wondrous.

if you're not, you ought to be," he added, seeing that the Bear was up again and ready to be off.

"This can't go on," said God Allfather, so He swung a roose and sagged up the Bear into the black Arctic sky. But the hounds hung on to its tail, and so were carried up too. And as for Finn, he took the hero-leap, and with one jump was on the Pole, and with the next was in the Northman's Torch (*Arcturus*), and with the third was on the Hill of Heaven itself. And that's where he went back to on the day he died after his three hundred years of mortal life. He's never moved since, and he won't move again, till Judgment Day. And by the same token, you can see the Great Bear prowling round the Pole still,

and Finn the Watchman never letting him go by, night or day, day or night, and far away down are the two Hounds that herd the Great Bear and his mate. And when these come too near, Finn hurls his spears, and that's when we see the Northern Lights. And behind the streamers and the auroras and the rainbows and the walls of ice Finn looks into the Garden of Eden—Paradise as they say, just the Flatheanas of the old tales, the old songs. And who would be doubting it?

[We regret to record that MR. WILLIAM SHARP, who wrote under the pseudonym of FIONA MACLEOD, died in Sicily, after a distinguished literary career, on December 12th, 1905.—ED.]

OLD CHRISTMAS FEASTINGS.

"Merry in the Hall
When beards wag all."

DESPITE all Puritan anathemas against the "carnall pompe and jollity" wherewith good Englishmen were wont to celebrate Christmas, the historic feastings and revelry of the season have never become wholly obsolete. True, the glory of the boar's head procession is now but seldom seen; swans and herons, crane and sturgeon have yielded place to the lighter fancies of decadent digestions, and such Christmas pies as that "near nine feet in circumference," and containing *inter alia* four geese, two turkeys, six snipe, four wild ducks, 20lb. of butter, and two bushels of flour, made by Mrs. Dorothy Patterson, housekeeper at Howick, no longer exercise the ingenuity of our cooks or the capacities of our guests. Who in this present age has leisure large enough to consume even a moiety of a pie weighing some 12st., and taking two men to present it at table! A caviare sandwich, the lightest vol-au-vent, better befits our modern stomachs. That we may gauge the full measure of our falling away, how thin and "pepsinical" is the century of our lot, let us glance at a few extant menus of old English feastings.

First in place came, at Christmas-time, the boar's head soused; served, if we take the Inner Temple Christmas for example, "upon a Silver Platter, with Minstralsye." An ancient version of the carol for bringing in the boar's head has been preserved in a Miscellany of the fifteenth century, and as this rendering is, we think, but little known, we transcribe a portion thereof, preserving the delightful spelling of the original:

"Hey, hey, hey, hey, the borrys hede is armyd gay.
The boris hede in hond I bryng,
With garlond gay in porttoring,
I pray yow alle with me to syng,

With hay."

The poet proceeds to proclaim to lords, knights and squires, priests and vicars, that the boar's head is the first mess:

"Then commys in the secunde kowrs, with mykylle pryde,
The crannus, the heyrrouns, the bytteris by ther syde,
The pertrychys and the plowers, the wodecokus and the snyt,
With hay."

Then followed "larkys in hot schow"—was this lark pudding?—and good drink thereto, the poem concluding with a reference doubtless to the "furmety" of the English Midlands, a dish till



A GAME OF TABLES.

recently in vogue, and consisting, we believe, of the new corn, husked, stewed, and then eaten in milk:

"Furmante to pottage, with wennisun fyne,
And the hombuls of the dow, and all that ever commis in;
Cappons i-bake, with the pesys of the roow,
Reysones of corrons, with odyre spysis moo."

Did the hombuls of the dow originate the phrase, humble pie? The boar's head carried a lemon in his mouth, and branches of rosemary were stuck into him. Puritan zeal fell even, it would seem, on the Christmas rosemary, for we are told that "nay, the poor rosemary and bays and Christmas pie is made an abomination" among the zealots of the commonwealth. At Hornchurch, in Essex, the folks, as we gather from an old county history, formerly wrestled for a boar's head on Christmas Day. Are there yet any traces of the custom lingering, we wonder, in village memories?

Perhaps no English dish can show a longer pedigree than this "boris hede," for it is recorded that in the twelfth century, a hundred years even before the date of our illustrations, King Henry II., upon the day of the young Prince's coronation, "served his son at the table as a sewer, bringing up the bore's head with trumpets before it, according to the manner."

But what of the "secunde kowrs" of "mykylle pryde," as sung by our fifteenth century poet? It is noticeable that this entirely consists of birds, and in a charming drawing by a fourteenth century artist on a psalter of the period it is curious to see that equal prominence is given to the poultry and game of the larder. Cranes, herons, bitterns, snipe (as we take "bytteris" and "snyt" to be), partridges, larks, plovers, and

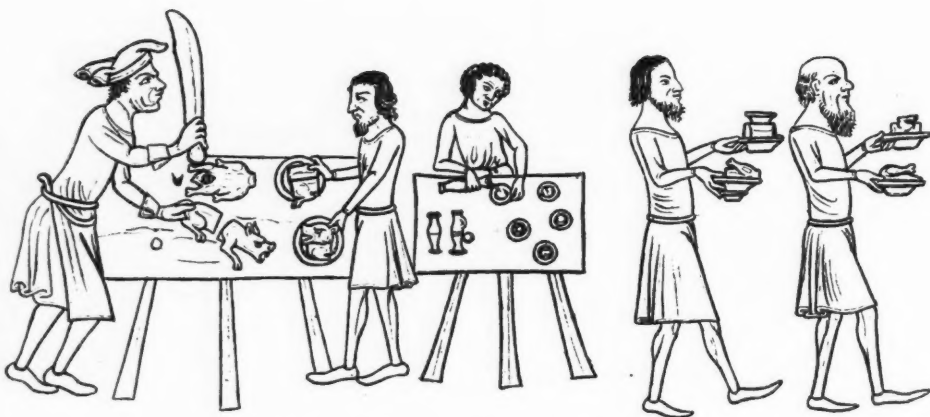


THE MAN OF THE MOMENT.

"woddokus" must have made a goodly show on the great oaken tables in the hall; such tables as still stand in the magnificent baronial hall of Penshurst, and in the banqueting-hall at Haddon, hacked with many a deep knife-cut, eloquent of old-world jollity, of the honest joy in good victuals that rewarded

the sturdy, outdoor life of forester and huntsman, knight-errant and soldier of fortune. Men armed to meet adventures at every turn of the road, and to slay an enemy any day in fair fight, as a gentleman should, did not greatly trouble their heads over vegetarian quibbles or the nice adjustment of albumen and proteids in their food. The Elizabethan dined royally, drank deep, and breakfasted on beef and ale. The brains of a Shakespear, a Burleigh, and a Drake were not nourished on plasmon cocoa or grape-nuts. To return to our mediæval menu. "Furmante," as we have seen, was doubtless the wheat and milk of modern country custom, and the aforesaid "hombuls of the dow" would be the giblets of the doe. The Yule-dough or dow was "a kind of baby or little image of paste which the bakers formerly baked at Christmas-time and gave to their customers." The word "dow" signified a little cake in the North of England. The figure might be made in ginger-bread or dough, cut out with head, arms, and body, as though the hands touched in front, and with two eyes of currants. It would appear that the Yule Dow was familiar to Elizabethan cooks, for Ben Jonson, in his "Masque of Christmas," introduces "Minced Pye" and "Babie Cake" as two characters who duly play their parts in the drama; but of course our readers will not confuse dow (dough) with dow (doe). No difficulty is presented by the baked capons; but the more elaborate Christmas pie fails to appear. That this was a standard Christmas dish is evidenced,

to take but one instance, by the opposition thereto in olden days of the Quakers who inveighed "against Christmas pye as . . . an hodge-podge of superstition, Popery, the devil and all his works." One Misson, an old traveller in England, observes: "Every family against Christmass makes a famous pye. . . . It is a great nostrum, the composition of this pasty: it is a most learned mixture of neats' tongues, chicken, eggs, sugar, raisins, lemon, and orange peel, various kinds of spicery, etc." Our traveller does not mention what family nostrum was taken after this pie. In the North of England a goose was always the chief ingredient in a Christmas pie; and Allan Ramsay tells us how



THE COOK AND THE KITCHEN KNAVES.

the good ale-wife never failed to tempt customers to her house at Christmas with a goose pie.

"Then ay at Yule
whene'er we
came,
A bra' goose pye
And was na that a
good belly
baum?
Nane dare deny."

The date ascribed to our illustrations is the early part of the fourteenth century; and in this same century

we have recorded how the King, Richard II., kept a most royal Christmas at the great Hall of Westminster, "with daily justings and Runnings at Tilt; whereunto resorted such a Number of People that there were every Day spent twenty eight or twenty six Oxen, and three hundred Sheep, beside Fowl without number." We have noticed how largely birds occupy the menu preserved in the already-quoted fifteenth century carol, game and poultry accounting for half the dishes enumerated. This preference appears again in the detailed account, given by Sir William Dugdale, of the great feast held in the following century, in honour of the newly-elected Serjeants in the Inner Temple Hall. Among all the dishes here named not once does beef or mutton appear; clearly ox and sheep were none accounted of in the great festivals of that day. The menu for "two mess of meat" for the high table, whereat dined the Lords of the King and Queen's Privy Council and certain Spanish Lords, is set out as follows, with the cost of each dish appended:

A Standing dish of Wax, representing the Court of Common Pleas, artificially made, the charge thereof	£4 0 0
A shield of Brawn for either mess	—
Boyled Capons, in White-broth, two at a Mess	0 5 0
Swans roasted two, each Mess one	1 0 0
Bustards two, for each Mess one	£1 0 0
Chewet Pies, eight, to each Mess four	—
Pikes four, to each mess two	0 10 0
Capons roasted four, to each mess two	0 10 0
Venison baked four large Pasties, every mess two	—
Hern and Bittern four, each mess two	0 16 0
Pheasants roasted four, to each mess two	0 16 0
Custards two	—

This was the first course only. The second course included "two dozen planted jellys; two cranes, £1; 12 partridges, 16s.; four Red deer pasties, 16s.; 'certain large Joules of sturgeon'; twelve woodcocks and plovers, 6s. 8d.; 8 baked Quince-Pies; 12 'Rabbit Suckers,' 4s.; 12 roasted snipes, 3s. 4d.; three dozen larks, 2s.; two March-panes, 6s. 8d." At the tables of lesser dignity were served, among other dishes, mallard, teal, pidgeon, roasted veal, and roasted conyes. The contributions of the new Serjeants, in kind, "for the better furnishing of the Feast" are enumerated under the heading of *Cates*, and include such items as swans, 10s. each; pea-chickens, 2s. each; red-deer, 10s. each; woodcocks, 8d. a dozen; turkeys, 4s. each; curlews, 1s. 10d. each; godwits, 6d. apiece; knots, 1s. apiece. Godwits, knots, and curlews would sound strangely to the ears of modern diners in the Inner Temple. For this great feast it is recorded that the Serjeants "made choice of one



BRAYED IN THE MORTAR.



WITH MINSTRALSYE.

Wilcocks for their Cook, whose office it was to furnish the Kitchen with Potts, Panns, Spits, Racks, Chafers, and other like necessities."

From the days of the Merry Monarch, when the black gloom of Puritanism was somewhat lifted, we have more than one pleasant picture of old English merry-making at this our "joyful'st feast," of the "cheerfull carols of the Wassel Cup," the masking and mumming, the dancing and music, the

"Good cheer,
Minced pies and plum-porridge,
good ale and strong beer"

that "Poor Robin" celebrates in his "Almanack" for 1695. Poor Robin, by the way, has a healthy objection to niggards in Christmas fare:

"But those on whose table no victuals appear,
O may they keep Lent all the rest of the year!

(And) as for curmudgeons, who will not be free,
I wish they may die on the three-legged tree."

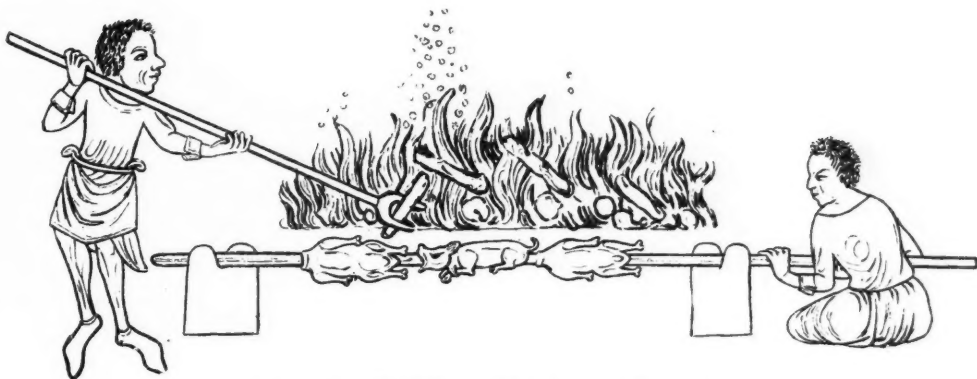
The puerile vegetarian sect of the present day, solemnly writing their articles on "Christmas without Flesh-eating" and considering good ale to be an invention of the Devil (much as the old-time Quaker held the Christmas pie to be derived from the Scarlet Woman of Babylon), would have received short shrift in the robust sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Men in those days

"Fought and sailed, and ruled and loved, and made our world," and also our English literature. Neither at Christmas nor at any other time did it occur to them to fill their minds with tracts on eating vegetables, or their stomachs with stewed beans.

It is an excellently-healthy air that we breathe among these old records of Christmas; an air wherein the song of the "wenches with their wassail-bowles," and the shouts of lads that will "a mumming goe," from the merry streets chime pleasantly with the echoes from ancient halls, where "each room with yvie leaves is drest," and where many a smoking feast kept up men's hearts, and warmed them withal, we doubt not, the good Canary wine going round the while, and sturdy voices singing the glees and catches now, alas! so seldom heard. It is good for man to take life, now and again, to the tune of

"Without the doore let sorrow lie;
And if, for cold, it hap to die,
Wee'll bury't in a Christmas pye,
And ever more be merry."

G. M. GODDEN.



"AND ALL THEIR SPITS ARE TURNING."

WILD LIFE IN THE ABERDEENSHIRE HIGHLANDS.

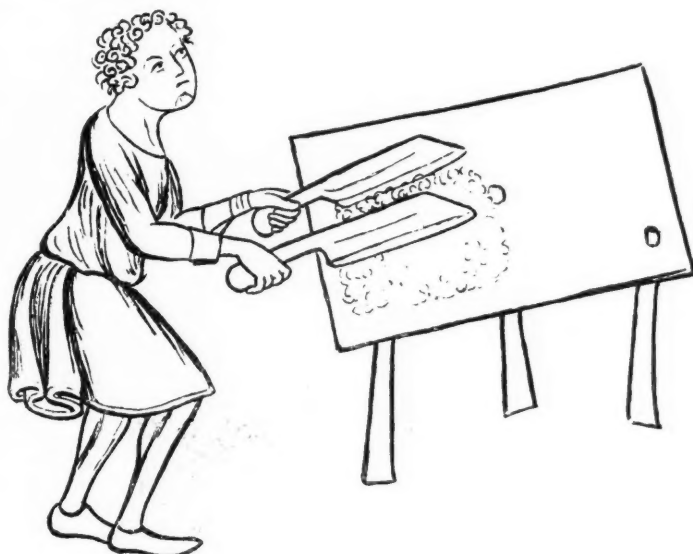
A DECEMBER DAY ON THE MOUNTAINS.

DECEMBER is a lonely month amongst the Scottish Highlands, and it is rarely that the weather is clear enough for an expedition on the hills. After almost two months of uninterrupted wet weather, we had two or three beautiful spring-like days in the early part of the present month, ideal weather for an excursion on the mountains. Setting out at day-

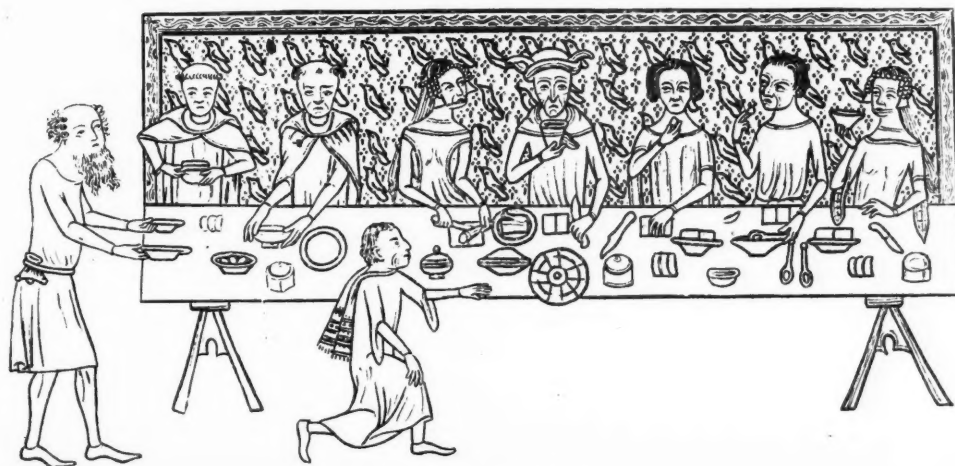
break, you note that the river has risen considerably, owing to the melting of the snows on the higher hills, and its red-brown waters are rushing swiftly seawards. Numbers of water-ousels are skimming its surface, every now and then disappearing beneath the water. The larches fringing its banks are now almost bare, and here and there a solitary tree, more vigorous than its companions, still stands partly covered with its gold needles. All the ground on the hillside is carpeted with gold where the larch needles have fallen to the ground. In December the ants are usually all sound asleep under the ant-heaps; but this year, owing to the exceptional mildness, they have been crawling about as actively as in midsummer, which is a very rare event indeed in this part of the world. The bats also are flitting about morning and evening, and even during the day—at this season of the year—noon is gloomy in the pine forests. As you wend your way up the

glen, a heron rises lazily from the mountain torrent, where he had been watching for a fish, and soon can be heard the croak of a raven as he flies lazily overhead with the wind. Numbers of grey crows are also flying in the same direction, so probably a hind has been shot, and the crows are hastening to the scene to be in time for the "gralloch." Although the day is warm, there is a strong gale blowing on the hills, and you can with difficulty make headway against it. Leaving behind the pine forest, where have been noted companies of blue and coal tits searching for insects, you strike out in the open, with the mountains in full view, heavily wreathed with snow. Some blackcock rise in front and fly off with the wind. It seems to be the case that the black-

cock takes slower wing beats than its near relative, the red grouse, but this may not always hold good. At a height of 3,000ft. the ground is still frost-bound under the surface, although it has become soft on the top. Deep snow-wreaths are met with, but these are literally being blown to bits by the strong gale. Some deer are seen in the distance, but they are very wild, probably still remembering the deadly rifle, which has now been silent in the forests for nearly two months. The watershed is reached at a height of about 3,000ft., and from here a good view is obtained. All the hills over 3,500ft. are heavily coated in snow, with the tops enveloped in mist. Where you yourself are standing the ground is almost completely snowbound, and where this has melted mould has already formed, owing probably to the grass and heath decaying beneath the snow. All at once you suddenly come upon five or six roosting hollows of the p'armigan. These birds roost in the



"THE MEAT IS A SHREDDING."



ABOVE THE SALT.

snow, merely scraping a slight depression and allowing themselves to be almost covered with the snow. All around can be seen their footmarks, and larger footprints near by show that a fox has also discovered their retreat. As you are lunching a solitary ptarmigan is seen flying towards you, and without noticing the intruder he settles some hundred yards away, on a narrow strip of land surrounded by deep snow. He feeds a while, working his head about, as is the ptarmigan's custom, and then, after his meal, leisurely wings his way off again, disappearing amidst the distant snows. Shortly after a pair of splendid golden eagles soar majestically by, right in the teeth of the wind, with little apparent motion of their wings. Seeing that the wind is blowing with gale force it is almost incomprehensible how these birds can possibly fly against it with so little effort. Looking down on a small loch, perhaps a couple of miles away, you see what at first appears to be the smoke of a fire near its banks. However, it turns out to be the spray swept clean off the loch by the gale. The top of each wavelet is caught by the wind, and blown in spray to a height of quite 20ft., being carried many yards from the loch's margin. You note that in spite of the gale a part of the loch still remains frozen, but the ice is being fast broken up by the wind. Almost the only birds in these snow-bound wastes are the ptarmigan and the snow-bunting. The snow-bunting, at this season, is completely white, except for its wings, and is a charmingly-pretty little bird. Until quite recently it was not supposed to nest in Great Britain, but within the last two or three years its nest has been found on some of the highest Scottish mountains. In the winter the buntings congregate in huge flocks, and do great damage to the corn-stacks. A keeper told me once he killed thirty of them at one shot. On the way down from the mountains numbers of grouse are met with, but below the snow-line. It is rare for them to be found above 3,000ft., although nests have been found considerably higher, and grouse and ptarmigan occasionally inter-breed. Darkness is falling as you reach the low grounds, and a glorious

combatants and conceals himself well in the vicinity. It would be interesting to know what reasons the birds have for fighting at this season of the year. One could readily understand it in February or March, during the mating season; but surely the birds can have no love affairs in December. Sometimes the golden eagle finds out these meeting-places, and then the blackcock are rudely interrupted in their combats, and it is a case of "each one for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost." SETON P. GORDON.

FROM THE FARMS.

THE GUINEA-FOWL.

WE are glad to see that the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries is giving some attention to that somewhat neglected bird, the guinea-fowl. We all know that it is kept frequently as a pleasant adjunct to the country house, but comparatively few people understand what a useful inhabitant of the farmyard it may be. It is a very economical fowl to keep, because, loving to roost as it does on trees in the open air, it gets up early in the morning and finds the greater part of its own insectivorous food, not only feeding itself, but ridding the fields of many baneful pests. Mr. H. de Courcy points out that, although the gross returns from it are not so large as from chickens, poultry, or ducks, the net returns are frequently better, because it is so cheaply kept. Guinea-fowls do not lay in the winter, but do so in the spring, generally beginning about April.



Copyright.

EWES AT PASTURE.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

day on the hills is fitly brought to a close by a sunset of extraordinary beauty, which lasts for nearly two hours after the sun has disappeared.

THE HARVEST IN THE UPLANDS.

The year 1905 will long be remembered by the upland farmers on account of its disastrous harvest. Not within living memory has the oat crop been so late in being secured as is the case this season. At the time of writing (December 5th) some fields of oats are still uncut, and the reaping machine has been rendered useless owing to the corn being flattened and twisted by the rain and snow storms. All the cutting, therefore, has to be done with the scythe. By this time the corn has become useless for sowing purposes, and will probably be used for meal. A great deal of the crop now standing was cut before the weather broke on September 23rd, so one can imagine the condition it is in by now. Grouse have done a good deal of damage, but the black game are the worst enemy of the farmers. Many of the farms where the crop is still unsecured are over 1,000ft. above sea-level, and one at least is 1,400ft. high, so at any time the harvest is a precarious one. The farmers are doubly to be pitied, because this year the crop was considerably above the average.

SPAWNING SEASON OF SALMON.

This autumn the salmon have had a very indifferent spawning season, owing to the continued floods. Fish have been in the rivers in good numbers, but the flood-water must have washed away great quantities of spawn, while those fish which spawned while the water was high probably had their eggs left high and dry when the floods subsided. The Dee and Don were both in high spate for weeks, and numbers of salmon were caught on the fields bordering the river, and, let us hope, were returned to their native element. The salmon which run in the autumn are, as a rule, much heavier than the spring fish, and are supposed to spawn principally in the river, and not, as the spring fish, in its upper tributaries.

BLACKCOCK FIGHTING.

Blackcock are exceedingly pugnacious, and morning after morning in December they will assemble at a certain spot and fight their battles. At these meeting-places the grass is often quite worn away, and the Highland keeper is usually successful in bagging a brace or two if he arrives before the

The hen loves to make her own nest in some safe part of the field, and though it is concealed cunningly, as she always utters a characteristic and curious cry as she leaves the nest, the observer may find it out pretty easily. Should the nest be discovered, the eggs may be regularly taken, when the hen will go on laying for about a month, or as much as three months if the eggs be cautiously removed, not too many at a time, because she is easily induced to forsake. The eggs are of a particularly fine flavour, one reason, perhaps, being that the guinea-fowl is a game bird; at any rate, sporting dogs will stand to it. The eggs take from twenty-six to twenty-eight days to hatch, and it is a good thing to set the eggs under an ordinary hen, who can hatch about twenty eggs, and it should be noted that the barn-door fowl makes a better mother than the guinea-fowl. The chicks are usually reared in a combined coop and run, which may be cheaply made of boards and wire-netting about 5ft. long, 2½ft. wide, and 2ft. high. "This should be divided into two parts, making a coop or sleeping compartment 2½ft. by 2ft., and a run of 2½ft. by 3ft." The chicks should be confined to the coop until they are accustomed to the mother's call, after which they may be given more liberty. The best food for them is insect food, dried ants and ants' eggs often being given by those who rear pheasants and guinea-fowls. But if there are ant-hills on the farm, it is only necessary to place the coop near them, when the chicks will feed greedily on the ants and their eggs. Mr. de Courcy says, "For table use guinea-fowls are but little inferior to the pheasant. The flesh is somewhat dark, but has a decided gamey flavour, and is appreciated when game is out of season."

THE PROGRESS OF FORESTRY.

On the recommendation of the Departmental Committee of British Forestry, special enquiries were made when the agricultural returns were being prepared this year as to the amount of

tree planting that had been done. The result can only be taken as approximate, since there are very many difficulties in the way of procuring the exact figures. But even as they stand, the facts are interesting. It would appear from the figures that 42,127 acres have been planted with trees during the last ten years, and that the extension was confined to England and Wales. As Scotland shows a decline of 10,356 acres, apparently the loss of woodland by storm and from other causes has not been made good. The net result is thus summarised by a writer for the Journal of the Board of Agriculture: "This tendency to reduced activity in the middle period, followed by greater activity after 1895, is suggested both in England, as a whole, and in Wales. In the Eastern Counties, as well as in the group of counties lying on the Welsh Border, there is a suggestion of continuously-progressive activity during the whole twenty-four years, but in all other parts of the country the general indication is in the direction just mentioned. In Scotland experience seems to have been more varied. In the Eastern and Lowland division the rate of planting has, on the whole, increased, whereas in the Western and Highland

division it seems to have substantially diminished. This seems to be largely due to some exceptional activity in Inverness and Ross and Cromarty during the decade 1881-91."

CROPS OF 1905.

The official returns of the crops harvested in 1905 are before us, and the outstanding feature is, of course, the great increase in the wheat crop, it being 60 per cent. greater than in 1904, and attaining the largest total since 1899. The yield proved to be greatest in Scotland, where it was 42.46 bushels, or 4½ bushels above the average. The yield in England was 32.66 bushels per acre. Barley, though grown on a small area, produced a very much larger yield than in 1904, the increase coming almost exclusively from Scotland. Oats were less satisfactory, though in Scotland, again, they were better than in any other part of the kingdom. Beans were also a very good crop. The yield of turnips and swedes was good, though not up to that of last year. Hay was the least satisfactory crop of the year, being considerably below the average, but the yield of hops proved to be the largest on record.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CAWSTON CHURCH.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Visitors to Cawston Church, so finely illustrated in your issue of December 9th, should not omit to call on the rector and ask to see the leather case of the sacred vessels, which is fourteenth century work, and a very rare, if not unique, example. Fine churches abound a few miles from Cawston, all, in fact, within an easy distance—Salle, Trunch (specially remarkable for the great span of its roof), Knapton, Worstead, Cromer itself, North Walsham, etc., while the remains of the two conventual churches of Walsingham, as well as the parish church, and the fragment of Binham Priory, one of the most interesting architectural remains in England, are not far off. The great distinguishing feature of the churches is their woodwork—roofs, screens, stalls, and benches—and Cawston, fine as it is, is by no means the finest example.—A. C. COXHEAD.

CHINESE METHODS OF FISHING.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—The method of catching fish in a boat illustrated, from Chinese sources, in your issue of September 30th, 1905, is still in use in the Straits of Malacca. The fisherman lets down from the side of the boat a screen of white canvas stretched on wood. The shoal of fish mistake this for some floating obstruction and try to leap over it, with the result that the fish jump into the boat, and are thus captured. This method is employed by Malays in our waters.—C. W. HARRISON, The New Club, Taiping, Perak, Federated Malay States.

SIR RICHARD JEBB'S HUMOUR.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—You have a good story of the late Sir Richard Jebb, whom I knew at Glasgow and Trinity, Cambridge. Here is another—quite true, and I think one of his best. Sir Richard Jebb, when Greek Professor at Glasgow University, used, towards the end of his lecture, to be somewhat troubled by the boisterous "roughing" (stamping) of the class in Moral Philosophy above his class-room, when a well-known lecturer finished (at the end of the hour) with his peroration. On one occasion a slab of plaster fell on Jebb's head, and he quietly remarked to his class, "It is obvious, gentlemen, that my 'premises' do not suit Dr. N.'s 'conclusions.'"—W. G. PEARCE, M.A., LL.B.

INCREASE OF BULLFINCHES.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Now that the trees are stripped of their leaves we find ourselves faced with a trouble which may seem small, but is, in fact, grave to those who, like myself, are fruit-growers. How it may be in other parts of England I do not know, but I do know that in the orchards of Kent and Sussex the numbers of bullfinches, which have been steadily on the increase for some years past, show an increase this year that is really formidable. It is quite impossible to compute the injury done to the fruit trees by these little birds picking out the buds. I am a great lover of birds, and the bullfinches are among our prettiest birds, but there comes a time when one has to think of one's pocket, and the numbers of these birds mean a considerable financial loss to a great many of us. No doubt the causes of their increase are the Wild Birds' Preservation Act and the compulsory education which takes to school would-be birds'-nesters. My object in writing to you is to ask if any of your readers can suggest a mode of dealing with the nuisance, of trapping the birds, scaring them from the trees, or, in short, any remedy. Shooting is very inadequate. Already this year the man who is supposed to shoot them has twice killed three at a shot, which will help to show what the numbers now are of this little bird, which was really not at all common only a few years back. Would it be any good to keep a tame hawk and let it fly now and then over the orchard? In short, any suggestion will be welcome, for the case is becoming a very hard one.

Since writing the above I have been offered a suggestion that may possibly be worth something, though it sounds rather fantastic. A fellow-sufferer and neighbour tells me that he intends next spring, when any nests of the bullfinches are found, to take the eggs, two at a time, and hard-boil

and then return them to the nest. The idea is that this will keep the bird busily engaged sitting on the eggs for an inordinate length of time, in the futile hope of hatching them, whereas, had the eggs been taken or the nest destroyed, the effect would have been that the birds would go straight away to work to make another attempt at bringing up a family. There may be something in the idea, and at least it has the merit of being more humane than the destruction of young birds, but I have doubts of its doing much to help us.—FRUIT-GROWER.

THE SEAGULLS' DANCE, AND ITS EFFECT ON WORMS.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—A few weeks ago there was a twice-repeated enquiry in COUNTRY LIFE as to why seagulls danced upon the sand, and as it has not been replied to, perhaps you will allow me to do so. It is no uncommon sight to see gulls, or other birds, thus dancing or padding upon the sand; curlews and most other shore-feeding birds do the same thing, the object being to frighten the lug-worms from their retreat below, when they appear, of course, to be instantly swallowed up. But the really interesting part of the performance is—why should the worms be so frightened by the shaking produced in the sand as to come to the surface? So long as they remain below they are comparatively safe from attack, by birds, at any rate, whereas upon the surface they are utterly at their mercy. The inference, of course, is that they have a greater dread of some enemy beneath, whose approach they believe to be heralded by the vibration which his movements through it impart to the sand. But I confess to being a little puzzled as to what that enemy can be. Perhaps some of your readers may be able to make a suggestion on the point. When the angler wants to collect earth-worms, in a place where it is not convenient to dig, he is accustomed to push a stick into the ground, and by moving that about impart a vibration to the soil around, which has the effect of forcing those worms within its influence to crawl to the surface. This is precisely the practice followed by the dancing gull, and with the same result. But on land we are led to suppose that it may be an attack from a mole which the worms fear; while on the wet sands there are, of course, no moles to be dreaded. Are the lug-worms thinking back, through a remote ancestry, to a time when they were dwellers upon dry land, and were acquainted with the mole, or his forbears, or what is the true solution of the matter? In turning up my old note-books in reference to lug-worms, I came across some extraordinary figures, which may be interesting to quote here. The calculations were made many years ago in connection with a projected railway across a stretch of sand several miles in extent, and most of whose surface is thickly studded with the little hillocks thrown up by these creatures, each worm passing a certain quantity of sand through its body every day for the purpose of extracting the nourishment contained in the microscopic life intermixed with the sand. Taking, then, these castings as averaging about 30z. each, and being distributed at the rate of about one per foot over the surface, we are confronted by the fact that something like 2,300 tons of sand are displaced in this manner every day over each square mile, or more than 750,000 tons in the course of a year! Thousands of the worms themselves must be consumed by birds each time the sand is laid bare by the tide, while, when it is under water, flat fishes and other inhabitants of the sea levy an equally heavy toll upon them. When we think of the vast number of microisms—mere sparks of life—of which the meal of each worm probably consists, we can form some idea of the immense rate of production and destruction of life which is hourly going on around us; but these are figures at which the pen grows loath, and I forbear further calculations.—LICHEN GREY.

WOODCOCKS FIGHTING.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Yesterday, while out shooting, I came quietly up to a ditch, and saw at the bottom of it two woodcocks fighting—one had hold of the other, which was squealing rather like a rabbit. On seeing me they ran in different directions, and the spaniels flushed them both. Is this not rather an unusual sight?—H. K. GORDON (late Lieutenant-Colonel, I.V.F.), Cross Park, Barnstaple.

A BASKING SHARK.

[TO THE EDITOR.]

SIR,—The readers of your pages might be interested in the accompanying photograph and description of a great fish washed ashore on the Clare Coast this summer. It may have been a basking shark, but no one who saw it had ever seen such a fish before. When first cast up by the sea it was entangled in a fragment of mackerel net, and some fathoms of hempen rope with a small barrel, or buoy, attached, with "Yarmouth" cut on it. The gills of the fish were in the form of a hood, forming a series of laps, and it had three rows of teeth. There were the large dorsal fin, and three other fins at either side. Even should it prove to be only a basking shark, the fact of its remaining entangled in the fishing-gear while swimming, probably from some fishing-ground, on the East Coast of England, to the West of Ireland, is interesting. By the local doctor's orders the fish was cut up and thrown back into the sea at once. Had it been known that it was a basking shark, and that the liver of that fish yields a quantity of oil, it might have been disposed of in a more profitable way. If it is not a basking shark, perhaps some of the readers of your paper will be able to identify the fish. The photograph was taken by W. Lacy, light-keeper, Loophead, who

gave the writer permission to publish it.—K.

[As our correspondent suggests, the fish is certainly a basking shark, *Selache maxima*.—ED.]



FLEMISH SHRIMPERS.

TO THE EDITOR

SIR,—Healthy, hardy, and strong look these two fishwives of Flanders, who not only sell shrimps, but catch them along the flats and sandbanks of the Netherland Coast. Their forerunners were those hardy Zeelanders whom Alva cursed so heartily and so

often in his letters to his master, Philip, and who aided not a little in the retention of Parma's force when the Armada was anchored off Calais. Like their ancestors, these women may be described as an amphibious race, mothers of children destined for the sea from the cradle, ready—who knows?—to engage in as stern and unequal a contest if ever the Teuton should cast covetous eye on, and stretch out covetous hand to, their hard-won country.—P.

THE HISTORY OF KENT COUNTY CRICKET.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—Lord Harris has asked me to assist him in preparing material for an important volume dealing with the history of Kent county cricket, amongst the prominent contributors being Lord Harris himself, the Hon. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Mr. Frank Marchant, Mr. J. R. Mason, Mr. W. South Norton, and Mr. W. H. Patterson. As we are anxious to make this work complete in every respect, may I be allowed through your columns to express the hope that, should any of your readers possess any interesting records, either in the form of old scores, advertisements of matches, prints or original drawings of prominent cricketers identified with Kent, old engravings of various important cricket grounds in the county, etc., they will very kindly send me particulars to the appended address, and also say whether they would be willing to lend them to us with a view to their possible reproduction in the book. I need hardly say that the greatest care will be taken of whatever may be sent, and, should we be able to use anything, an acknowledgment of the lender's courtesy will appear in the work.—W. HUGH SPOTTISWOODE, His Majesty's Printing Office, 6, Middle New Street, Fetter Lane, E.C.

MODERN GRATES.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—We have to call your attention to articles appearing in COUNTRY LIFE of September 23rd and October 14th. In the former a leading article, in the latter a reply thereto. Referring to the article "How Country Houses Catch Fire," we note that the writer makes use of the words "Well Fires," including in the term apparently all fires other than the old-fashioned grate, and stigmatising the whole of them as of a dangerous nature. Mr. Drake, in reply thereto, refers in the same manner to "Well Fires." We have to point out that the description "Well Fire" is not a generic term; but it is a name invented by us descriptive of our own particular fire and

incorporated in our Trade Mark, and applicable to our speciality only. We do not think that, when admitting the articles in question to your columns, it was your intention to do us any specific harm. Further, we would point out that the great safety of the "Well Fire" lies in the fact that, as part of the well is sunk, the fixer is compelled to remove the back hearth, and any timber underneath is thus exposed. Frequently when removing ordinary slow-combustion or other low grates to fix "Well Fires" we find charred beams and timber underneath the old hearthstone, thus showing how many fires are narrowly averted by the installation of "Well Fires." When fixed according to our printed instructions, "Well Fires" are the safest of all modern grates, as many letters received from architects and others testify. It would be unfortunate if the publication of your article and the correspond-

dence caused unnecessary alarm where it is totally uncalled for. For years the outcry has been for more economical fires, and more perfect combustion in household grates, which the "Well Fire" successfully provided, and the appreciation of our endeavours is testified to by the thousands of "Well Fires" which have been sold, and the hundreds of testimonials as to efficiency received by us, and also by the great revolution the introduction of the "Well Fire" has brought about in fireplace construction. In conclusion, we would again impress upon you the fact that "Well Fire" is not a generic term, but describes our own particular patent fire, and which is only made by this Company. To offer or sell any other fire under this name is a fraud upon the public.—For the Well Fire Company, Limited, Parkgate, Darlington, (Signed) J. FAWCITT, Director.

WORKMANSHIP IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "COUNTRY LIFE."]

SIR,—I am sending you the enclosed photograph in the hope that it may interest your readers. The original is a massive oaken door of the seventeenth century, forming the entrance to what was at one time a monastery off the Cathedral Close at Exeter, but which is now a private residence. Save for a chipped figure near the upper hinge, which can be clearly seen in the photograph, this door is in an excellent state of preservation, and, with the exception of the extreme lower portion, which has had to be replaced by reason of decay, the structure remains to-day as originally built. The immense rivets with which it is studded afford a little explanation as to why it is said to turn the scale at a little under a ton. Would that our modern suburban residences were as substantially constructed!—W. A. GEALE.

